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William B. Parsons

DISCOURSES

CHIEFLY ON

DEVOTIONAL SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE

REV. NEWCOME CAPPE.

To which are Prefixed

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE,

By CATHARINE CAPPE.

WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING A SERMON PREACHED AT THE INTERMENT OF THE
AUTHOR, BY THE LATE REV. WILLIAM WOOD.

“He being dead yet speaketh.”

From the second English Edition.

BOSTON :

PUBLISHED BY WELLS AND LILLY.

1818.



TO THE CONGREGATION

OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS

In St. Saviourgate,—York.

MY FRIENDS,

I AM persuaded that I could not render you a more acceptable service than by publishing a selection of Sermons, which, some of you will remember to have heard with delight, and which all of you, I doubt not, will peruse with interest, and, as I hope, with lasting advantage.

To you, in a more especial manner, your late honoured Pastor yet speaks.—He conjures you to be indeed “a peculiar people zealous of good works;” not distinguished so much from others, by difference of speculative opinion, as by strict integrity of principle, by candour towards all; by that charity, “which suffereth long and is kind;” by the exemplary purity of your hearts, and the active usefulness of your lives.—He exhorts you to aspire after perfect holiness—not alone for your own sakes, but that in you, “the truth as it is in Jesus,” may shine forth and be glorified.

My friends! when we look back upon the years that are gone, and reflect upon the many

neglected opportunities of greater improvement, that are for ever fled away with them; surely we must be seriously solicitous to “strengthen the things which remain.” We are still a favoured people; and though I am not permitted to speak of the talents, the virtues, and other eminent endowments of our present Minister, your own hearts will testify; and with them I rest the appeal.

Possessed of such advantages, ought we to remain “even as others?” Let us, my friends, be studious to abound more and more in every good word and work. Let us live, as those ought to live, who are hereafter to render an account, so that when “the days of the years of our pilgrimage are over,” we may celebrate an eternal triumph over sin, and sorrow, and infirmity, and be found worthy to join in “the song of Moses the servant of God, and in the song of the Lamb,” for ever and ever!

Your sincere friend,

CATHARINE CAPPE.

YORK, MAY 22, 1805,

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IT has always been my wish to select some of Mr. Cappe's Sermons for publication. Proceeding from the heart, I have thought they would reach the heart; and I have indulged the pleasing hope that there are those who would not only read them with interest, but who would seriously endeavour to imbibe the principles, and to feel the sentiments of piety they contain, and strive daily, like the Preacher, to approach nearer, and still nearer, towards Christian perfection. In this hope I may be deceived; but it has cheered many a lonely hour, and having so strongly felt its influence, I should not have done my duty if I had neglected to adopt the mode of conduct, suggested by it.

I am not, however, so visionary as to imagine, that the sentiments of the publick respecting the merit of these Sermons, or even the sentiments of persons whose turn of mind may be somewhat congenial, should keep pace with my own. I well know, that striking and elevating as are the views they exhibit of the power and goodness of God, and of the unspeakable importance of cultivating right affections towards him—animated and pathetick as is the strain of feeling with which they abound, they cannot be associated in the minds of others with the impressive man-

ner, the persuasive tones, the simple piety, which so exceedingly increase their interest with those who heard the Preacher, and who loved him, and which to their minds so forcibly recall his image, that scarcely can they persuade themselves, he is not still speaking! I should think, however, that independent of every thing extrinsick, they must have sufficient internal merit to recommend them. It is true, indeed, that a spirit of devotion is not the spirit of the times; yet some persons surely there are, who wish to discriminate accurately between sterling piety, which leads to every thing great, and noble, and consolatory, and that wild enthusiasm which erringly assumes its honoured name—some, who would wish to keep strictly within the boundary, beyond which pleasure, even innocent pleasure assumes a different character—to persons such as these, the Sermons here presented to them, cannot be without their value.

The Prayers are added by the Editor; although taken from Mr. Cappe's, yet as their present connexion and arrangement could not be his, any defects in these respects, if such there are, cannot attach to him.

In the Memoirs annexed to this volume, there are considerable additions made to those which were prefixed to the Critical Dissertations published in 1802, and the long quotations then given from the Sermons preached by Mr. Cappe on his recovery from a nervous fever in 1782, also from those on the love of God, are here wholly omitted, as the Discourses themselves form a part of this selection. The Editor has availed herself of Mr. Wood's kind permission to annex the Sermon preached by him at the funeral of the deceased, as a powerful independent testimony of the talents and virtues she has endeavoured to portray.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

I HAVE great pleasure in bringing forward a second edition of the following Sermons, first published in 1805, and which have been long out of print. They have been frequently inquired for, which I consider as a consolatory proof that the spirit of pure and genuine devotion has still its sincere votaries, however it may be hidden from the philosopher, who seeks for the solution of every great and appalling event in the mere operation of secondary causes;—from the warrior, who rests for success on his sanguinary sword;—or from him who places his chief happiness in the fleeting unsubstantial enjoyments of the present hour. —As a proof that there are many, especially in the calm still walks of life, apart from the toils of ambition and the direful conflicts of contending nations, who do not exclude the great Ruler of the Universe from “all their thoughts;” who consider his favour as the only true riches, and “who seek it with their whole heart”—not indeed in a pertinacious attachment to any particular system of theological speculation, but in a sincere desire of being conformed to the likeness of Him who was appointed to bring in “an everlasting righteousness;” of Him who continually went about doing good, and who did always those things that

were most pleasing to his heavenly Father—to his God and to our God !

On a careful perusal of these Sermons with a view to their republication, after the lapse of eleven years, my mind is so powerfully impressed by their superiour excellence, that I cannot refrain from dwelling for a few moments on a subject so near my heart, indecorous, as any eulogium on my part may be deemed. I should however restrain myself from this indulgence, could any impropriety of mine at all affect the memory of their revered author ; or if I did not cherish a latent hope, that by thus dilating upon their great merit, the casual reader might be induced to peruse them with more attention, and might consequently reap from the perusal more lasting benefit.

The three first Discourses on Faith cannot but be deemed highly useful, not merely as forcibly pointing out the great importance of this salutary principle in the daily intercourse and general conduct of human life, but as leading to a just discrimination between such of its objects as reason suggests and approves, and those of a blind credulity, a wild enthusiasm, or an abject, debasing superstition.

Respecting those which follow on “undue anxiety,” and “on the duty of joining thanksgiving with prayer,” we may confidently ask, where is the heart of ordinary sensibility which in its progress through life, in many a painful hour of anticipated misfortune or of painful suspense, has not stood in need of the cheering consolations they so powerfully recommend and so effectually impart ?

Of the extreme importance of those Discourses which treat on the obligation and reasonableness of the love of God; on the constant care and diligence required to keep it alive; on the incompatibility of the love of pleasure with the love of God, and on the characteristicks of those, who are governed by the love of pleasure, all must be fully aware who are in the habit of attending to the current of events, or of observing what daily passes around them. But as the generality are far from being of this description, the testimony of one who has had the ample experience of a longer life than was anciently attributed to man by the shepherd king of antiquity, must not be withheld. How many instances could she adduce from her own observation, were this the proper place for it, of the truth and unspeakable importance of the genuine Christian principles which these Discourses so forcibly inculcate!—To the serious attention of younger readers, who are just entering on the eventful career of human life, she would particularly recommend them; ardently wishing, that at a period when lasting impressions are most easily made, they may learn to be upon their guard respecting the opinions they adopt, and the consequent habits they form. But let them not rest on her feeble testimony, nor even on the powerful reasoning of the Christian preacher.—May the lamentable destruction of all moral and religious principle, and the total degradation of a great neighbouring nation, by the immoderate, never-ending pursuit of pleasure, operate as a more tremendous warning, and raising in a louder tone its terriffick voice, more forcibly compel the awful conviction!

The Editor may be pardoned if, as a female, she should take a peculiar interest in the Sermons which dilate on the

singular honour conferred on Mary of Magdala and her sorrowing companions, by their divine Master, in his appearing first to them after his glorious resurrection: A decisive proof surely, that in however degrading a light the sex may have been considered in days of great ignorance and moral depravity, and are even yet regarded on some of the finest portions of the globe, they are not so estimated in the sight of God;—that, in the Christian code, there is no distinction of persons; but, of which ever sex, or of whatever country or climate, those who fear him and work righteousness, shall assuredly be accepted of him. What a stimulus this, to those happy females who bear the Christian name, to be continually making progress in every mental, moral, and religious attainment!

Nor are those reflections less valuable that take their rise in the three following Discourses, from the contemplation of the tomb of Jesus; whether as tending to the confirmation of our Christian faith, to the improvement of our Christian temper, or to the increase of our love to Christ.

The very severe illness of the Author in the year 1782, gave occasion, as is mentioned in the prefixed Memoir, to that interesting development of the state of his mind during its severe pressure, and after his happy deliverance from it, so impressively detailed in the three Discourses on the use and improvement to be derived from such afflicting dispensations. They have been read with peculiar sympathy, both on this and on the other side the Atlantick, and the Editor has had the satisfaction of hearing, have been the source of great consolation to many an afflicted spirit.

On the four Discourses exclusively devotional, the Editor refrains from dilating. To a mind fully capable of duly appreciating the delicacy, truth, and beauty of the sentiments they express, it would be wholly unnecessary, and to readers of a contrary description, who are principally occupied in pursuits of ambition, of gain, or of pleasure, it would be to address them in an unknown language, and consequently would be quite unavailing.

The Editor makes no apology for subjoining the excellent Sermon of the late Mr. Wood, to this, as to the former edition. Little was it apprehended on the last day of the eighteenth century when Mr. Wood delivered his able impressive Discourse, that in the short space of eight years and three months, his sorrowing friend, Mr. WELL-BELOVED, should be called upon to perform the like painful office at his funeral! But such is the life of man!—and so true it is, that his life is “even as a vapour which appeareth for a little time and soon vanisheth away!”*

* Mr. Wood was a man of uncommon talents, and all his compositions were marked by an originality of thought, and a comprehensive view of his subject, which rendered them peculiarly striking. He published very little, and consequently was not generally known or duly appreciated by the publick. His friend Mr. Wellbeloved, who was one of the few that knew him well, incorporated a very useful analysis of some of his manuscript compositions which he was permitted to peruse, in an interesting Memoir written the year after Mr. Wood's decease. This Memoir like the subject of it, has not obtained the celebrity to which its merit, had it got into extensive circulation, must have procured for it; and this is the more to be regretted, as it contains a general outline of Mr. Wood's mode of instructing his pupils, who were females, in various branches of literature and science, exhibiting a striking specimen of the superiour comprehension of his mind, and of the masterly view he took of his subject, and which might therefore be rendered extremely useful to many others engaged in similar studies.

York, June 14, 1816.

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LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.*

MEMOIRS of persons who were eminent for talents, learning, virtue, and piety, cannot fail of being interesting to all who feel any solicitude about their own improvement, any wish to attain that degree of excellence, to which, even in this imperfect state, this dawn of intellectual life, the human mind has in numerous instances been found capable of arriving. It is with the ardent wish of stimulating others, "to strive after things that are excellent," that the editor of the following discourses republishes with some additions, what, on a former occasion she had laid before the public respecting the character of the preacher: to gain celebrity to his memory, were she equal to the attempt, would not be an object of her desire: When living, he sought not the praise of men; and now, if he were conscious of what is passing in this lower world, their praise or neglect would be to

* Memoirs of Mr. Cappe were originally prefixed by the Editor to two volumes of his Critical Dissertations; but as it is hoped that a volume of Devotional Sermons may interest many who will never see the former publication, she has ventured to prefix them, with some additions, to the present.

him a matter of no moment ;—less than the shadow of a shade.

Newcome Cappe, the eldest of six children, three of whom died in their infancy, was born at Leeds, in Yorkshire, February the 21st, 1732-3. His father, the Rev. Joseph Cappe, many years minister of the dissenting congregation at Mill-hill Chapel in that town, was a person of great learning, liberality, and piety ; eminently skilled in the oriental languages, and highly popular in the discharge of his ministerial functions. It was his custom to preach without notes for many years, owing to the following circumstance : Happening one day, on a visit to a distant congregation, to forget his sermon, he was obliged to deliver it from memory, and finding that he succeeded in the effort, although he continued always to pre-compose his sermons, he never afterwards committed them to paper : hence at his death scarcely any vestiges of them remained, except what were engraven on the hearts of a numerous, an attentive, and an affectionate congregation.

A striking proof of the high veneration in which he was held, has accidentally fallen into my hands. A respectable member of his congregation, who had taken notes of some of his sermons, and afterwards transcribed them for his own use, gave evening lectures from them many years after his

death; some of which are now before me, and are prefaced in the following remarkable manner: "If, in the course of my reading, any thing occurs that may fall beneath that true greatness and dignity of sentiment, with which that worthy gentleman, the Reverend Joseph Cappe, used to deliver his sermons, you will please to keep this one thing in your thoughts, that what I read was transcribed from characters, and only designed for private use." He married the daughter, and one of the coheirresses, of Mr. Newcome of Waddington, in Lincolnshire, a gentleman of considerable property, and great respectability of character. Their son showed early marks of that genius, and extraordinary application to study, which afterwards marked his character: at six years of age, he had made considerable progress in the Latin language; and while he was yet very young, he was so attentive an hearer of the preaching of his reverend father, that he was frequently asked by him on a Sunday morning, where his discourse the preceding Sunday had been discontinued; it being his practice, as it was afterwards that of his son, to continue the investigation of the same subject through a long series of discourses.

The immediate subject of these memoirs, at this period, was in the habit of rising at four in the morning, that he might read his lessons, undisturbed by the family. This

he did in winter by the kitchen fire, which, in that part of the country, it is customary to keep in all night; and when summer approached, and the weather allowed, it was his delight to take his book for the same purpose, and sit among the ruins of Kirkstall Abbey, situated about three miles from Leeds, on the banks of the river Aire. The picturesque scenery which he there enjoyed, aided by the impressive solemnity of the surrounding objects, contributed, no doubt, to cultivate and improve that fine taste for the beauties of nature, that high relish for the grand and sublime, which formed ever after a distinguished part of his character, and of which, it is apprehended, many instances will appear in the following discourses: Scenery like this it was ever his delight to contemplate; and to rise "from Nature, up to Nature's God."

His excellent father died of a fever at the age of forty-eight; an event which made an impression on his son's mind, never afterwards to be effaced. It was suggested to Mrs. Cappe, soon after this afflictive stroke, by a particular friend, that the uncommon talents, and extraordinary diligence of her son, then in his sixteenth year, would undoubtedly procure him the patronage of Dr. Secker, at that time bishop of Oxford, and rector of St. James's, (afterwards archbishop of Canterbury,) if he were introduced to him;

which, it was urged, could easily be accomplished; a connexion already subsisting between the two families, in consequence of an inter-marriage. On this subject she consulted her son; but although not insensible to the splendour of the prospect which might by this means have opened upon him, he did not hesitate to decline the proposal, knowing that the bishop's patronage could not be obtained without conforming to the establishment; a step which he believed would be inimical to that unfettered research into religious truth, which, even then, was a pursuit more congenial to his mind, than objects of ambition, or worldly aggrandisement. He was placed by his mother, in the same year, (1748,) with Mr. afterwards Dr. Aikin, at Kibworth in Leicestershire, where he remained one year; a period on which he always looked back with peculiar satisfaction. Here he began, in earnest, that intellectual career in which he so much delighted: he had a high respect for his tutor, by whom he was much distinguished, and had great pleasure in observing many early indications of those talents in Mrs. Barbauld, the daughter of Dr. Aikin, then four years of age, which have since obtained the general suffrage. The reader may not be displeased with the following specimen.

The tutor and his pupil conversing during a morning's walk on the subject of the pas-

sions, they were called to dinner before the conversation ended. When they were seated, the doctor continued the subject: "You see, therefore, sir, that joy, accurately defined, cannot have place in a state of perfect felicity; for joy, supposes an accession of happiness." "I think you are mistaken, papa," exclaimed a little voice from the opposite side of the table: "Why do you think so, Lætitia?" "Because, papa, in the chapter I read to you this morning in the Testament, it is said, There is more *joy* in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance."

From Kibworth, Mr. Cappe was removed to Northampton, where he continued to make great progress in literature, under the celebrated Dr. Doddridge; of which the writer of these memoirs, occupied in the melancholy employment of reviewing a box of letters, written many of them by departed friends, accidentally met with the following testimony, in a letter to Mrs. Cappe, then residing at Leeds, dated Northampton, June 8, 1750.

"Dear Madam, .

"It is highly fit, that when my much esteemed pupil and friend returns to you, to spend the vacation at home, he should bear along with him that testimonial to his excellent character, and exemplary behaviour, which he has so long deserved. I therefore

beg leave to assure you, that I cannot recollect I ever had a pupil under my care, whose genius and capacity exceeded his, and few have equalled him in a close and steady application to business. His distinguished talents have been adorned with the modesty of his behaviour and sweetness of his temper; and he has still conducted himself, so as to preserve the Christian character, and to encourage my hopes of eminent usefulness under the ministerial. I cannot but congratulate you, dear madam, on the agreeable prospect you have in him, and most earnestly pray, that God may spare his life and yours, and so establish the health of both, that you may long see him very useful in the church, and may see the life of the worthy father, continued in that of the son.

“ P. DODDRIDGE.”

During the three years Mr. Cappe spent at Northampton, some doubts arose in his mind respecting the evidences of christianity; and feeling it impossible to engage in the ministry, if these doubts should continue, he determined to investigate the subject in the most impartial manner. For this purpose he read carefully the writings of the French and English deists, weighing, as he went along, their several objections, the greater part of which appeared to him to be levelled, not against the christianity of the scriptures, although these writers might conceive them so to be,

but against the additions and corruptions which in the lapse of ages have, from time to time, been added to it. How often have I heard him rejoice and triumph in the final result ! a firm persuasion, never afterwards shaken, that the gospel of Christ is indeed the truth of God ! It struck his mind, however, even then, and he was afterwards fully confirmed in the opinion, that its great value consisted, not in any set of metaphysical doctrines, but in a plain exhibition of important facts, by means of which, to adopt the highly figurative, but strikingly energetick language of an Apostle, “ We are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead ;” that “ as he lives, so we shall live also :” an exhibition fully adequate to supply the most powerful motives “ to perfect holiness, in the fear, and love of God.”

During the time he spent at Northampton, Mr. Cappe composed a short-hand for himself, on principles wholly dissimilar to those generally in use, and remarkable for its neatness and brevity. This short-hand he afterwards constantly used : he made a grammar of it ; but not having taught it to any of his pupils, it is probable that the far greater part (if not the whole) of his valuable labours would have been lost after his decease, had he not latterly been prevailed upon to dictate from it to a transcriber.

The high opinion which Dr. Doddridge had formed of the talents, disposition, and attainments of his pupil, was still farther evinced by him in the summer of 1751, a little before the time when it was expedient, on account of his own declining state of health, to try the efficacy of a warmer climate. Having been desired to recommend an assistant preacher to the celebrated Dr. Chandler, at the Old Jewry in London, he fixed upon Mr. Cappe, then only in his nineteenth year, and recommended him so strongly, that he was invited to accept the situation, one of the greatest respectability and importance amongst the dissenters. This offer, it was imagined, could not be withstood ; but the laborious student, who did not so highly appreciate his own attainments, had set his heart upon going to Glasgow, where the late excellent Dr. Leechman then filled the theological chair ; where there was at that time a constellation of eminent men, and where he hoped to render himself better qualified for the important discharge of ministerial duties, than it was likely he ever might be, if he engaged in them prematurely. Soon after this, Dr. Doddridge went to Bristol, and from thence to Lisbon, where he died of a consumption in November following, universally beloved and lamented. Mr. Cappe remained at Northampton during the remainder of the session, under Mr. Samuel Clarke ; and, in the year

1752, his desire of removing to Glasgow was gratified.

A person who is at all in the habit of "marking the current of events," can scarcely avoid here making a moment's pause.—That a youth of an ingenuous reflecting mind, who had been carefully educated by such a father, should not accede to the proposition of putting himself under patronage which must have been followed by a total dereliction of early principle, is not very wonderful. But, when an offer was made of a situation highly flattering and advantageous, which required no such sacrifice, how pure and ardent must have been that thirst after knowledge which could lead to the rejection of it!—Yet, upon this single circumstance, did all the future events of Mr. Cappe's life depend. Had he gone at so early a period to have been the assistant minister with Dr. Chandler, to a London congregation, who can say, after such an introduction, to what celebrity he might afterwards have attained? But the motives for his refusal being upright, it was never, whilst he lived, the subject of a moment's regret that he did not accept the situation: and now, having finished his course well, what a subject of thankfulness will it for ever be, that the station allotted him by Providence, and acquiesced in with his own free and cheerful consent; whatever, at the time, were its privations, its trials and its diffi-

culties, should have been no other than precisely what it was !—For who, on looking back on a tempestuous sea, full of rocks and quicksands, which they have passed successfully, would not revere and bless the pilot by whose wisdom and care they had been conducted in safety, by whatever course, “unto their desired haven !”

It is remarkable, that although Mr. Cappe spent three years at Northampton, distant only sixty-six miles from the metropolis, which, in common with other young men, he wished to visit ; stimulated also, as I have often heard him say, by an ardent desire of hearing the celebrated Dr. Sherlock, and of witnessing the inimitable talents of the no less celebrated Garrick, both at that time in the zenith of their fame ; yet he never once made an excursion to London. He had previously formed a determined resolution, that no temptation should lead him to relax his studies ; and he also considered it as a duty he owed his mother, and remaining brother and sister, (who at the death of their father were not left in affluence,) to persevere, as he had begun, in a plan of the strictest economy.

At Glasgow Mr. Cappe continued three years, pursuing his studies with such unremitting ardour, that he seldom allowed himself more than four or five hours sleep, in the twenty-four. A consumption had nearly been

the consequence, from which he was preserved, under the blessing of Providence, by the friendly care and judicious treatment of the great Dr. Cullen, then a professor in that college. Happy in the successful career of intellectual pursuits ; in the cordial esteem of Dr. Leechman, principal of the college ; in the society of many amiable and ingenious fellow-students, a few of whom still survive ; in the friendship of the different professors, the late Dr. Adam Smith, Dr. Moore, (esteemed the most eminent Greek scholar in Europe,) and the late Dr. Black, notwithstanding the pressure of an habitual head-ache, the days and weeks flew rapidly away. And here, one cannot but remark, that if to a mind thus constituted, the pleasure arising from intellectual and virtuous progress be so exquisite, even in this present state of imperfection and infirmity, what must be the triumph, (to quote a passage from some of his manuscript sermons on Christian perfection, now before me.) when we are arrived in those nobler mansions of our Father's house, "where our acquisitions shall be made, if not without exertion, yet without painful exertion, with ease and with delight ; where there shall be no mixture of evil with our good, of error with our knowledge, of discontent with our satisfaction, but all our virtues and all our enjoyments shall be for ever pure, for ever lively ; fearing no decline, experiencing no languor, but proceeding, without interruption and with-

out allay, nearer and still nearer to the blessedness and holiness of God." *

The reader of sensibility will forgive me for inserting the following extract from the letter of a venerable minister of the gospel yet living, the fellow student, and intimate friend of Mr. Cappe, both at Northampton and Glasgow, after receiving a copy of his Memoirs in August, 1802.†

"I opened the parcel with reverence, and held its sacred contents to my view with an awe peculiar to such occasions. But when I traced the many thoughts it suggested of former times and occurrences, when my friend and I walked together in our youthful and college days, not only without one anxiety or painful care, but, I will say to *you*, without one sinful indulgence, even for a moment; happy in the cultivation of useful knowledge, and of every virtuous and pious disposition; you will readily conceive how the image of my loved companion renovated my delightful feelings.—How it led me from walk to walk, and poured occurrences one after another upon my joyful recollection. And I am thankful to say, that even now, in my 75th year, I not only clearly review, but deeply

* The Sermons from which this extract was taken, form part of a volume chiefly on practical subjects, published by the Editor in 1815.

† The late Rev. Mr. Urwick of Clapham.

feel my own sensations. Ours was then, and always continued to be, a religion that lifted the heart to God ; that spread moral sentiments over the whole mind, and moral virtues over the whole life. Supported by the divine doctrine and promises of the gospel, our religion disdained and defied every temptation to immorality the world could put before us.—I do not mean by all this to boast.”.....“But I could not forbear writing the above, on this pressing occasion, in honour of my deceased friend, and brother, and in order to express my thankfulness for the benefit of a sound and good education ; for being taught, even from childhood, amidst all the diversity of speculative opinions, and in due depreciation of them, to attend to the practical religion of the heart and life, as the one thing needful.”.....“I love retrospection, especially when I can take it with a virtuous and religious fellow traveller, who lived with me in former times.”.....“My friend and I entertained no doubt of recognizing each other in a future state.”—“The dead are not perished, we were accustomed to say to each other as we conversed in our chambers, or walked in the fields ; they must live for ever, and thus we usually closed our discussions, about the world to come.”.....“This hope still remains, we were intimate and cordial friends at Northampton, we were as much or more so at Glasgow, and I trust we shall be most of all so in a much better and more exalted state, where

every good thing, both moral and intellectual, will be improving for ever."

Here we cannot but remark, that, if we may trust the united testimony of these virtuous and amiable fellow students, and why should they wish to deceive us? they had even in their youthful days abundantly more true enjoyment, than the unprincipled pursuers of licentious pleasure. And should such a character, in spite of his criminal excesses, attain, like the writer of the above, to the advanced age of threescore and fifteen years, and accident throw in his way the memoirs of a wretched partaker in his youthful crimes, the seducer of unwary innocence, who had brought down, it may be, many a hoary head, with sorrow to the grave—with what sensations would the narrative be perused? Would they sooth and cheer his own rapid descent, to "the dark and narrow house?" Is he lost to all sense of moral feeling? Hardened in the ways of wickedness, has his mind become reconciled to the gloomy and abject hope of annihilation? But what, if the peradventure should occur to him, that death may not so terminate, that he and his abandoned companions may meet again? Would any one wish to inflict, upon his bitterest enemy, a punishment more severe, than the mere horror of such a possibility?

Mr. Cappe left Glasgow in May, 1755; and in the November following, on the death of

Mr. Root, was chosen co-pastor with Mr. Hotham of the dissenting chapel in St. Saviourgate, York ; and, on the death of Mr. Hotham, the beginning of the ensuing year, (May 26, 1756,) he was ordained sole pastor ; in which situation he ever afterwards remained. Of his talents as a preacher, his ardent desire that his hearers might not only understand the principles of their religion, but feel its power upon their hearts, and exemplify its efficacy to others, in the holiness of their lives, the reader will be enabled to form some estimate from the volume of Sermons now before him.

His first publication, a sermon preached in November, 1757, on the victory of Rosbach, gained by the great Frederick of Prussia, happening to coincide with the national feelings of that day, was received with an enthusiasm seldom equalled. It was taken up by the leading political characters, and passed through thirteen editions with great rapidity. Some of these editions were instantly bought by persons of the first eminence, and sold at reduced prices at their own expense, in order to promote the general circulation. The late John Lee, Esq. then of Lincoln's Inn, and afterwards attorney-general, during the administration of lord Rockingham, in a letter now before me, passes the highest encomiums on this discourse, which he says was the universal topick of conversation and of praise ; and

then adds : “ Of the multitude of readers that London has afforded you, and several of taste and ingenuity I have known, not one of them has been sparing of the highest praise they could bestow ; and you will not be offended with the compliment of lord Ligonier, who, after reading it last Sunday, said, he thought Mr. Cappe preached as well as the king of Prussia fought.”

Of the manner of this sermon, I shall give the following short specimen : “ It is Providence that displays to us the most astonishing, the grandest, and the fairest views of the divine perfections : It is providence that pleads, with the most powerful persuasion, the cause of virtue and religion : It is providence that enlivens us in the praise of God, that banishes all fear from our love of him, and all doubt from our confidence in his government. The giddy overlook her ; the busy are deaf unto her voice. Happy he, who, sometimes retiring from the throng and the noise of life, stands as it were at a distance, an undisturbed spectator of its events. He sees the hand of God moving and directing the vast machine. He hears the voice of providence, like that which John in vision heard, as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying Alleluia, for the Lord God Almighty and All-gracious reigneth.”

Celebrity like this might well have intoxicated the mind of a young author ; that it did not, in this instance, produce any such consequence, the reader may probably be prepared to expect. So far, indeed, in the middle and later periods of life, was Mr. Cappe from thinking or speaking of this sermon with pleasure, that he never called it by any other denomination, than that of *my folly*. His mind was sensibly pained with the reflexion, that in a moment of youthful ardour, he should have appeared as an advocate for employing the sword in defence of religious truth : being fully persuaded that true christianity is wholly inimical to such an appeal ; that its genuine conquests are those of the heart ; and that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

In October 1759, Mr. Cappe married the eldest daughter of Mr. William Turner, merchant in Hull ; in whose amiable society he passed thirteen years of much happiness, although tried by many disappointments and heavy afflictions. Among these were some considerable pecuniary losses, occasioned by the failure in trade of two near relatives ; their subsequent sickness, and death, under his own roof ; the loss of two infant children ; and, last of all, the declining state of Mrs. Cappe's health. She lingered more than two years, and then died of a consumption, in the

spring of 1773, leaving him with six young children.

Of the temper of mind with which he sustained these afflictions, the most honourable, and, to the eye of friendship, the most soothing testimony remains, in a series of discourses, from which three are selected in this volume, and which were composed by him when under their severest pressure, from the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to his Philippian converts, then suffering under persecution : " Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

During this period also, Mr. Cappe incurred the loss of the Rev. Edward Sandercock ; a friend whom he highly esteemed ; whose amiable and enlightened mind gave peculiar interest to the social hour ; and whose kind assistance, in his weekly ministerial labours, saved him many an exertion, which frequent indisposition, or family misfortune, would have rendered oppressive.

This gentleman died in January 1770, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. The last tribute of respect and affection was paid by his friend, in an address spoken at his grave, and in a sermon delivered afterwards to a very numerous audience ; both of which were pub-

lished by general desire, but are now out of print.* From the address, I shall give the following extract.

* Of the last moments of this excellent person, I meet with the following account in Mr. Cappe's handwriting, in a pocketbook : " Having thought that I saw in him the symptoms of instant death, I sat down at the head of the bed, and for some minutes expected every breath to be his last : perceiving, however, that he grew rather better, I administered to him a little of his cordial, and he presently revived, so far as to call to me on my sitting down again,—‘ Mr. Cappe.’ I rose, and answered, ‘ Sir ?’ He looked as if he would say something : finding that he did not, I asked, ‘ Would you have a little more of your cordial ?’ ‘ No.’—I waited some time, in expectation that he would speak to me, and then asked, ‘ Would you have any thing else ?’ ‘ No.’—I waited still some time, persuaded that he had something to utter ; but fearing that it might slip from him, after a little pause, I asked, ‘ What would you have, sir ?’ ‘ My good friend, farewell.’ I could stand no longer ; but by and by, finding him attempting to speak again, I rose, and stood leaning over him. he seemed to be pleased with the attention that was given to him, and said to me, in a broken voice, and interrupted sentences, ‘ I am *now* satisfied that in these scenes of death there is nothing irreconcilable with the moral perceptions, (meaning, undoubtedly,) perfections of God—I suffer—I have many consolations—I hope I shall have patience to the end—the end is not far.’ He prayed to God to bless me, my children, and all my family. He then recommended Mrs. Sandercock and all her friends to God ; and immediately afterwards, addressing himself to me, desired she might know that he was very thankful for all her kindness to him ; and expressed his hope that she would consider it as what she owed in gratitude to God, to bear a short separation with resignation and cheerfulness, for she had still many mercies to be thankful for. ‘ Now,’ said he, ‘ my good friend, you may sit down : if it were not for this oppression, I could sleep.’ He did fall asleep almost immediately, and slept for a considerable time with great tranquillity.”

A neat marble monument was erected to his memory in the chapel in St. Saviourgate, in York, by his widow. The inscription, written by Mr. Cappe, is as follows :

To the memory
Of the Reverend EDWARD SANDERCOCK,

An able and faithful Minister of Jesus Christ.

Devoted to his Master's service,
He pursued it, and delighted in it,
Till he died.

Let this monumental Marble remind those who heard him,
How his private virtues illustrated and enforced his public teachings ;
And engage them to be followers of him,
As he was of Christ.

Two volumes of sermons written by this gentleman, were afterwards published by Mr. Cappe.

“ To the earth we have committed all that was earthly of a Christian brother, of a faithful minister, of a much esteemed and well-beloved friend. There we have left, in that land of silence, and forgetfulness, all that remains in this world, of one, concerning whom, your heart-felt grief, on this occasion, testifies that you numbered him among the wisest, the worthiest, the most devout, the most friendly, and the most amiable of mankind. How different in this day, from those happy days, gone to return no more, when with him we were accustomed to take sweet counsel together, and walked to this house of God in company ! How different is this season, from those happy seasons, gone to return no more, when his devotion animated our devotions here, and his lips distilled wisdom ! How different the dead, from the living friend ! How different this house of God, which once was his exceeding joy, from the house that he now inhabiteth ! Yet that, my friends, is the house appointed for all the living. There, you, by and by, must make your bed. Great as the difference is between the living and the dead, that change must pass on you. There is a day, at what distance no man knows, but every man will acknowledge that it may be very near, when our places shall be vacant, both in God’s house, and in our own ; when the tears of friendship shall bedew our clay-cold bodies ; when our funeral shall pass along the streets ; and the gazing multitude

shall be gathered round our open graves. What think you of these scenes? Is there nothing serious in them? Is there nothing important after them? Are you ready for them? Are you fit for death? Are you prepared for judgment? Are you provided for eternity? Is it certain that you are?—From my heart I rejoice with you, for death cannot hurt, though he lay his hand on you to-night. Nay, it would be better with you than it is, if you were sleeping by our faithful friend. The living may apostatize from the paths of virtue; but to those who are dead in Christ, who have continued patient in well-doing to the end, all that heaven means, and all that God has promised, is secure. Watch and pray, be faithful and devout, preserve your virtue, dispatch your work, improve your talents, for blessed are those servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find watching."

In the year 1771, a literary club was instituted in York, of which Mr. Cappe was the planner, if not the first proposer, and which was kept up nearly twenty years. It consisted originally of seven members, Dr. Swainston, the Rev. Dr. Allanson, chaplain to the House of Commons, the Rev. Mr. Howlett, the Rev. Mr. Tillard, rector of Wirksworth in Derbyshire, George Lloyd, Esq. Mr. John Hotham, nephew of the late minister, and Mr. Cappe: Dr. Hunter, Henry Goodricke, Esq. Dr. White, and Mr. Cappe's eldest son,

were afterwards admitted members. The number was limited to nine ; and as vacancies happened, the places were supplied.

The members of the club met in rotation at each others' houses, every Wednesday at five o'clock ; when, according to the rules they had agreed upon, a given subject was discussed ; which must have been proposed and approved the preceding Wednesday, and entered in a book kept for the purpose. The discussion was to be conducted in the way of inquiry, rather than debate ; every member to contribute whatever might be his information or discovery respecting it, to the general stock of knowledge. They had no other refreshment than coffee and tea ; and the club broke up precisely at nine o'clock.

I shall select a few of the questions proposed by Mr. Cappe, as a specimen.

“ What judgment ought to be formed of the conduct of Abauchas, in the story told of him towards the end of Lucian's *Texaris* ? ”

“ What are the rights of man over the animal creation, and what the principles by which they are limited ? ”

“ The senses of taste and smell ; their connexion ; and the final causes of both. ”

“The human stature, its varieties, the limits of those varieties, and the efficient and final causes, of those varieties, and of their limitations.”

“The discovery of the polarity of the magnet, and the fruits and consequences of that discovery.”

“The influence of diet, considered in respect of quantity as well as quality of the food, both upon the bodily constitution, and the mental powers and dispositions.”

“The influence of a great and growing capital on the manners and prosperity of a nation.”

“The origin of sea-salt, and the uses of it.”

“The powers and pleasures of imagination. Do they not decline in the progress of life? And of that decline, what are the efficient and final causes?”

“The character of Mahomet: Was he a fanatic, or an impostor?”

“The true sense of Aristotle’s definition of the end of tragedy.”

“The art of writing; the modes, materials, and instruments of it; and the consequences of this invention.”

“The annual changes that take place in some species of the animal creation; their efficient and final causes.”

“Contagion of diseases: Its nature, extent, efficient, and final causes.”

“Lavater’s physiognomy.”

“The infancy of mankind compared with that of other animals.”

“Different modes of disposing of the dead bodies of mankind.”

“Comparative merits of natural and civil history, considered as two distinct sources of entertainment and improvement.”

“The connexion between the colour of vegetable bodies and other sensible qualities; and the dependence of both on light.”

“English juries.”

“The proper subjects of musick.”

“What advantages are derived or may be derived to man from the faculties of the brute creation?”

“Variety of seasons, compared with the uniformity of them, in respect to the in-

fluence of each on the health, the comfort, and the talents of mankind."

"Comparison of the denal and duodenal arithmetick."

"Migration of fishes."

"The mode of inflicting capital punishments."

"The condition of old people, in respect of sight, before the discovery of dioptrick glasses."

"Is it consistent with good policy to permit the perpetual and unlimited accumulation of charitable donations and bequests?"

"Culinary salt, the origin, the use, and the need of it to men and other animals."

"In what respects are the indications of nature to be the rule of human conduct, and how are these indications to be discovered and interpreted?"

"Of the real use of the knowledge of medals, and other such monuments of antiquity."

The close of the year 1773 was rendered peculiarly interesting to the writer of these

memoirs, by the resignation of the vicarage of Catterick, in Yorkshire, on motives purely conscientious, by her highly-honoured and esteemed friend, the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, the successor of her father in that benefice. Of that gentleman, so well known to the world, and happily still living, it may not be permitted her to speak;* but that such a character, in circumstances of peculiar difficulty and distress; distress, of which no one who is not acquainted with all the circumstances whence it arose, and who was not present during the scene, can form an adequate idea: that such a character should have been rudely attacked, at such a time, in the publick papers, is an instance of human depravity hardly to be credited. But what is too malignant for a bigot, without piety, to attempt?

The attack was made, by a dignitary of the church,† in the York Chronicle of January 28, 1774, under the signature of "Erasmus." This attack, illiberal and abusive in the extreme, was repelled, in a very spirited and masterly way, by Mr. Cappe, who showed on this, and on a few other occasions, that, when

* The above was written in the year 1805. This highly venerated friend exchanged his earthly tabernacle for a heavenly inheritance, in November 1803, and a very interesting memoir of him was published by Mr. Belsham, of Essex Street, in 1812.—
EDITOR.

† The late Dr. Cooper, rector of Kirbywhiske, and arch-deacon of York.

powerfully excited in defence of integrity and truth, he did not less excel on subjects that led to controversy, than in other compositions better suited to his habits and his taste. His first reply was signed "A Lover of Good Men," and introduced by the following quotation from some printed sermons of Dr. Cooper's, taken as a motto: "An alacrity in calumniating, is one of those abominable qualities which the devil himself possesses in an eminent degree; he is called the adversary, the hater, the accuser of the brethren." Discourses by William Cooper, M. A. 1766, p. 80. So high was the esteem in which Mr. Lindsey was universally held, and so general the indignation excited by this virulent attack, that no less than four different replies to it, from different pens, under the signatures of "A Layman," "A Parishioner," "Pro Amico," and "Martin," appeared in the Chronicle of the following week. There was also a paper signed "Philo Erasmus," meant as a reply to the "*Lover of good Men*;" in which the writer, (Erasmus himself,) denominates his unknown antagonist "a doughty champion," who, he tells the editor, "is horridly encumbered with his heavy armour." The signature of "doughty champion," therefore, was humourously adopted by Mr. Cappe, in his subsequent replies to "Philo Erasmus," "Timothy quick eye," and "Bucer," the signatures of Dr. Cooper. A variety of other writers, many of them persons un-

known, came forward, on the defensive, in the course of the controversy, under the various signatures of "Apicius secundus," "David Simple," "Emlyn junior," "Admonitor," "Biblicus," "Thomas Stave, the parish clerk," "Disconsolate Mark," "One of the People," &c. &c. The "doughty champion," however, continued to hold the first place, and "Erasmus" was at length completely driven off the field, beyond the possibility of return.*

It was on this occasion, that the writer of these memoirs became first acquainted with the subject of them, and that the foundation was laid of that friendship, which although death may interrupt, it cannot destroy; and which, she humbly trusts, will be renewed and perfected, where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor tears," and "where God himself shall be for ever present."

During this year, (1774,) Mr. Cappe was afflicted by a distressing and alarming complaint. For some months every object appeared double, which obliged him to wear spectacles, with one of the glasses darkened;

* Towards the conclusion of the controversy, the following epigram was sent to the editor of the newspaper by an unknown hand:

"Sore beaten and bruised, hear, the Doctor cries ont,
What means all this rage, all this riot and ront?
What offence at Erasmus, that down he must fall,
Examine, you'll find, he said—Nothing at all."

he persevered, however, in his ministerial and other labours ; although it may well be imagined that the exertion was not easy.

In the August of 1776, he had the affliction of burying his mother, who died in this city, in the seventy-sixth year of her age : she was a person of great virtue, and exemplary piety. After this event, his sister came to live with him ; and to her kind attention, and affectionate care, his young family were under the greatest obligation.

Early in the year 1777, Mr. Cappe published a sermon, preached on the 13th of the preceding December ; a day set apart for a general fast, during the American war. This sermon, not being equally in unison with the national prejudices of the day, was not fitted, like that on the victory of the king of Prussia, to become the theme of general praise : But, in the judgment of the truly discerning, it raised his character, as a preacher, to the first eminence. It quickly went through two editions ; and the highest encomiums were passed upon it by men of great celebrity. In a letter now before me, dated April 28, 1777, Mr. Lee speaks of this sermon in the following terms : “ Sir George Savile, happening to call on me a fortnight since, on a Sunday morning, I showed him your sermon, and read him several parts of it. He was delighted beyond measure with it, insisted on taking it

away with him, and expressed some astonishment that he had not before heard a great deal of it: I have seen him frequently since, and he has never failed repeating his admiration, in terms that do him and you equal honour. He sent to Johnson for seven or eight copies, but none are to be had; and he was strongly disposed to take a liberty with you, by giving orders to print a new edition of it, without your knowledge. He has shown my copy to many eminent men, particularly to Mr. Burke, who dining with me the other day, told me that he concurred in sir George's opinion of the performance. It has been read by many in the house of commons; and last night the duke of Portland sent me a card, to desire I would give him an opportunity of reading it. I had no other but that which you were so obliging as to send me; but I borrowed one of Mr. Lindsey, and sent it to his grace, who, I since find, had such a taste of part of it from sir George Savile, as gave him an eager longing for the rest. Perhaps this may produce no other consequence than that of introducing you to the acquaintance of sir G. Savile, whose company, I think, you will like, and exciting a desire in some other eminent men, who will find it more difficult to come at you than he will, unless next year you will do me the favour to visit us here, which I much wish."

As this sermon has long been out of print. and as some of my readers may be gratified

by seeing a specimen of what was so highly praised by these eminent persons, I shall subjoin the following extracts.

“If to be christians in name would support our hope, there were little need of this day’s humiliations: But if to give success to our prayers it be needful that we be christians indeed and in truth, however you may speak peace to your own souls, I know no warrant to justify your security and confidence: For, tell me, though we rank among the first of christian countries, is the character of this country christian? To what could you appeal in support of that assertion?

“Would you allege in proof of it, that we have learnt to call the vilest vices by the softest names? that intemperance is exalted into sociality; lewdness, into gayety; adultery, into gallantry; profaneness and obscenity, into vivacity and spirit; frivolousness, into fashionableness, and hypocrisy into politeness? Would you produce in proof of it that we have learnt to call the noblest virtues by the most ignominious appellations? that devotion, is enthusiasm; that conscientiousness, is scrupulosity; that integrity, is obstinacy; that non-conformity to fashionable though unreasonable opinions, and to polite though immoral practices, is superstition, weakness, and preciseness? Are these the proofs of our christianity?

“ Will you go into our streets and thence collect the evidences of intemperance, sensuality, and profaneness, which will not fail very soon to meet you there ?*—Will you go into the scenes of mercantile and commercial life, and thence collect the selfish projects, the ordinary deceptions, the authorized frauds, the systematick over-reachings which tradition, not reason, which custom, not religion, have sanctified ? will you thence collect the instances of those who, hastening to be rich, have fallen into divers snares ; who, impatient of poverty, of mediocrity, of inferior affluence, through the instigation of avarice or ambition, have from day to day adventured, and at length accomplished, the ruin of many other families as well as of their own ? —Will you go into the scenes of publick entertainment, and there, in the most innocent of such scenes, observe a sight conspicuous indeed to the serious eye, the ministers of luxury and vanity, the panders of an outrageous appetite for pleasure, more punctually met, more freely attended, and, almost beyond credit, more liberally rewarded than the ministers of virtue, the instructors of youth, and the dispensers of the bread of life ?

* What a source of consolation would it not have been to the author, could he have foreseen the strenuous exertions of the liberal friends and supporters of those two most noble sister institutions, the British and Foreign Bible, and School Societies, so effectual in their tendency to prevent these enormities ! Assuredly he would have felt and acknowledged with holy triumph, “ this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”—EDITOR.

Will you change the scenes of publick entertainment for the scenes of publick devotion, will you there collect the giddy crowds who go thither for no better purposes than those which carry them to every other concourse? will you there collect the formalist whose religion rests in the hearing of the word and the praying of the prayer?—Will you quit these publick scenes for scenes more retired and domestick? will you thence collect the uninteresting, insipid, unedifying conversation? will you there observe how fast time flows, and how folly flows as fast? will you observe how seldom the bounds of innocence are kept; how commonly such assemblies are erected into uncandid and iniquitous tribunals, where the practices, the manners, the customs, the conduct of others, as innocent as our own, are tried by our own prejudices, and by that test condemned; where the affairs of others occupy an officious concern, while our own most important affairs, both in company and in solitude, are neglected; in such scenes will you observe how often some absent character is sacrificed to pride, to self-conceit, to malignity and ill-will.—From these less publick, will you go into still more private scenes of life? will you inquire into the government of servants; into the education of children: will you produce me some evidence of our christianity from these?—If servants serve their masters, what care is there whether they serve God or not? if children are ac-

complished, what care is there whether they be good?

“ Education is not formed against the world, but for it; not to arm us against temptations, but to betray us to them.—To live, to shine, these are the objects of education, which seldom rises higher, in one half of the world, than the attainment of some mechanick or some liberal art; and in the other half, than the acquisition of external accomplishments. To live well, unblameably, laudably, and usefully; to be adorned with the true beauty of universal unaffected virtue; to shine in the solid glories of pure and undefiled religion, is this the object of the many? their object for themselves? their object for their children?—Are the houses of their fathers to the rising generation the schools of piety, of self-government, of sober-mindedness? Alas, here it is that they first learn to neglect their Creator, and to neglect their souls. Here it is that they first imbibe the principles of frivolism, of vanity, of extravagance. Here it is that they learn to make amusement the *end* of life. Here it is that they early receive those impressions, and acquire those habits which preclude the possibility of acquiring a taste for real pleasure, and a capacity of solid worth. Here it is that they learn to seek for happiness from abroad, to go abroad in quest of it, and to fetch it in, as they expect, from every thing that

smiles and glitters in the eye of vain imagination. Here it is that they learn to admire what is not admirable, to love what is not lovely, to dread what is not dreadful, to place the point of honour where it cannot stand, to laugh at those things which are not ridiculous, to make light of that which is very serious, and to trifle with those things that are dangerous as firebands, arrows, and death."

At the time when Mr. Lee's letter was written which I have quoted above, he was become the leading counsel on the northern circuit, and was considered as being in the high road to the first preferments. His invitation to his friend, to visit the metropolis, was constantly repeated by him every year, accompanied by inducements the most flattering; but he never could draw him thither. This might in part be owing to Mr. Cappe's situation, being left with a young family, to whom he was tenderly attached, and whose welfare claimed from him unceasing attention; to his having engaged in the education of a few pupils; and to his ministerial connexion in this city, from the duties of which he never absented himself without great reluctance. A cause, however, no less powerful, might probably be found, in his own peculiar turn of mind. Reserved, modest, unambitious, his first solicitude was faithfully to discharge every duty, and his greatest pleasure to meditate on the works and on the word of God,

Eminently skilled in the classick writers of Greece and Rome, in the Hebrew, and in the Hellenistick Greek, it was his supreme delight to study the scriptures in their original languages : to consider the modes, customs, principles, and prejudices which prevailed when the gospel was first preached : the actual state, both of the Jewish and heathen world, at the time when the several books of the New Testament were written : the effects which were manifestly produced upon the minds of all, by the continuance of miraculous powers among the first believers, until the destruction of the Jewish polity ; and the appeal which was constantly made by these writers to this fact : to contemplate the character, the situation, the views, and the phraseology, both of the friends and enemies of the gospel : to enter into the sublime ideas, and to imbibe the heavenly temper of its Author : carefully to compare scripture with scripture : and from these various sources to endeavour every day to gain more and more accurate knowledge of the sacred writings, and a more just and comprehensive view of the government and providence of God.

The only excursion in which for many years he indulged himself, was an annual visit to his friend Mr. Constable, of Wassand, near Beverley, with whom he ever continued in habits of the strictest intimacy and friendship from the year 1762. when they were first in-

roduced to the acquaintance of each other, by their common friend, Sir Wadsworth Busk, late attorney-general in the Isle of Man.

I know not whether it was immediately after the publication of the fast sermon in 1777, that a correspondence commenced with Mr. Burke ; but I know that for some time Mr. Cappe did correspond with him, although I have not been able to find any of his letters. Mr. Cappe corresponded very frequently with the late Dr. Priestley, from the year 1761 to 1785 ; likewise regularly, for some years, with Mr. Lindsey ; and occasionally with the late archdeacon Blackburne, Mr. Turner of Wakefield, Dr. Leechman of Glasgow, Dr. Adam Smith, Dr. Black, Dr. Kippis, the late Mr. Walker of Manchester, Dr. Toulmin, Dr. Disney, Mr. Wood of Leeds, Mr. Turner of Newcastle, and many other eminent characters.

I find, from a great number of letters, now in my possession, that during the time of Dr. Priestley's residence at Warrington, at Leeds, and with the marquis of Lansdowne, he submitted several of his publications to the judgment and correction of Mr. Cappe ; but after that period, they had not much communication. In a letter now before me, dated London, March 23d, 1774, Dr. P. says—"I am most exceedingly concerned

to hear of the alarming symptom you mention,* and am sorry that my work † should be in your hands so very unseasonably, though I value your remarks so much that I would rather wait half a year than proceed without them. I am so truly sensible of your superior judgment on these things, that there is hardly a hint that you have suggested, which I have not adopted in what is yet printed of the Institutes.”

In one of his last letters from Birmingham, dated March, 1784, at the beginning of Dr. Priestley's controversy with Bp. Horsley, he expresses himself in the following manner: “Dr. Horsley, I hear, is preparing a reply, and will, I believe, soon have it in the press—I wish you were a little nearer to me; I want just such a *regulator* and *guide* as you would be to me in this business. You are too far off to be consulted on emergencies.”

These two short quotations, among many others that might be selected, bear ample testimony to the humility of this eminent and extraordinary person, and also to the high opinion he entertained of him who is the subject of these memoirs.

Although Mr. Cappe's disposition and pursuits led to the love of privacy and retire-

* See page xlv.

† Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion.

ment, there was nothing in it gloomy or unsocial. He was, on the contrary, uniformly cheerful; and his talents for conversation, where he met with persons whose turn of mind was at all congenial, were of the first order. He was particularly fond of young children; of observing their little actions, their playfulness and simplicity, and would even mix in their infantile sports, the source of so much innocent enjoyment. I have often heard him remark, that if arguments were wanting of the infinite benevolence of God, they might be found in the variety and multiplied enjoyments of that early period. What pity, would he say, that forms so fair, should ever, in their progress through life, be despoiled of their loveliness, by the baneful influence of bad example, perverted sentiment, unhallowed passion, and vicious pursuit!

He published two more fast sermons during the American war, in the years 1780 and 1781; a third also was published in the year 1795, which he had composed and preached in the year 1782, and which is especially remarkable for the striking coincidence of our national situation at those two periods. Of these fast sermons, Mr. Wood has given the following just, comprehensive, and beautiful outline, in memoirs of Mr. Cappe, originally prefixed to the excellent funeral sermon published by himself at the time, and now republished, by his permission, in this volume.

“ The first of these sermons is a strong and indignant invective against the vices of the times, in which the preacher delivers his sentiments with great freedom on the origin of that unhappy contest, the spirit manifested in the prosecution of it, and the general character of its abettors. He surveyed from a distance, in his retirement, the degeneracy of all ranks of men ; of persons in publick office ; of the clergy ; of the army ; of professing christians as well as of unbelievers ; of the serious and regular, as well as of the gay and dissipated ; and, through an optical anomaly, not uncommon to the mental eye, saw them, perhaps, in somewhat more than their full magnitude ; at least, he felt them with a keenness, and spake of them with a severity, of which he would not have been capable, had he been accustomed to mingle with them, and take a nearer view. So true is it, that we cannot preserve the perfect quickness of our moral sensibility, but by keeping as carefully aloof from a familiar and close survey, as from the actual practice of vice.”

“ In the second, he takes a milder tone, but at the same time displays with dignity and force, ‘ the temptations and dangers incident in time of war, to the host that goes forth, to the power that sends them out, and to the people in whose behalf they are sent.’ ”

“In the third, wearied with the contemplation of vice and misery, he seeks for consolation and support, in the pleasing reflection, that as *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*, ‘all has been, is, and must be well.’ In this discourse we discover the germ of the principles which are more fully developed in those on the providence and government of God.”*

“In the fourth he sinks again into despondence, and laments in a strain of tender compassion, the continued insensibility, luxury, and profaneness, which threw a dark shade over the publick manners, and threatened the infliction of still severer judgments.”

From the first of these fast sermons, I have given a pretty copious extract. The second, preached in the year 1782, contains an accurate delineation of the evils incident both to governours and the governed by a state of war, whatever may be its final issue, whether prosperous or adverse. It strikingly points out the unlawfulness of war when protracted longer than is necessary for self-defence, and ascertains with great precision the conduct which statesmen ought to pursue, whether in respect of enemies or subjects. From the third, I shall give the following short extract, both as a specimen of the extensive views,

* First published in the year 1795, and a second edition in 1811.

taken in the first place, of the universal government and providence of God ; and secondly, of the powerful persuasives to sheath the sword which cannot but present themselves to the real and contemplative christian.

“ In every thing to give thanks, to rejoice evermore, are christian precepts, and christian principles can enable us to keep them. To the man who is accustomed to look at this life in the light that eternity reflects upon it, and to regard the present scene as his school of education for an interminable being, in any other light how diminutive are all human things ! An empire is an atom, and an age a moment. In the fates of individuals, with respect to their pleasures, wealth, or fame ; in the fates of nations, with respect to their interests, prosperity, and glory, there can be nothing that should check his joy in the consideration that, in whatever names of power and majesty mortals may array themselves, the throne of empire is really filled by the ever-living God. In every circumstance, whether of publick or of private life, he and all men can do their duty, can maintain their dignity, can keep good conscience and good hope ; pain, sickness, poverty cannot hinder this ; the battle, the conflagration, the tyrant cannot hinder this ; and, as to the rest, the intention is kind, and the issue good, and a few short days will bring him to that

transporting moment, beyond which pain, injustice, folly, imperfection cannot follow him, and to that happy land whose inhabitants are all righteous.

“If a patriot-king, the benefit of whose virtues extends but to a few provinces, and lasts but for a few years, is, at all times, a blessing so devoutly to be wished for, what a subject of triumph and rejoicing is it that this kingdom and that kingdom, this world and every world are governed by a Parent-God! That King of kings can never forfeit his right to your allegiance, can never alienate your affections from him, can never vacate the throne on which he sits, or create in you a wish that he should vacate it: out of his dominions, out of his protection, out of his blessing you cannot be; living, dying, dead, reviving, you are his subjects and he is your God. Rejoice then in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright.

“.....If these things cannot touch you,” (namely, that in the sight of God all men are brethren) “look before you to that quiet grave whither, by and by, with you, all the actors on this tumultuous scene will be withdrawn, where the monarch will have found his nothingness, and his armies felt their impotence; where the bubbles, motes, and shadows that now excite such mighty agitations, shall make no impression on you; where

your hearts, become cold to every earthly interest, shall at length be still, and enemies, their enmity extinguished, shall sleep, beside each other, in security and peace.

“ If this cannot humanize you, look to that high tribunal, where the ambitious ruler shall be ashamed, at last, of the low pursuits, the petty trifles, and the glow-worm glories that seduced him ; where the sanguinary hero shall shudder at the blood he once shed without remorse, and where no warrior shall justify himself, but the patriot whose sword was the weapon of defence, and the protection of the injured and oppressed.

“ If this cannot move you to discard your prejudices, to curb your selfishness, to abash your passions, reciprocally to embrace as friends and to love as brethren, think again, and yield yourselves to the benignant influences of the thought, that the hour cometh, when, the imperfections of human governments being abolished, and the interfering interests of mortality annihilated, in the city of the living God, all the sincere, though misguided, children of his family, out of every nation, tongue, and kindred, even the generations that have fallen by each other's swords, looking back on the events, in which, perhaps, they saw nothing wise, and felt nothing kind, shall be heard throughout all that wide-stretched region, as the voice of a great multitude, and as the

voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, exulting together in the government of God, and calling on each other to be glad, and to rejoice, and to give honour to him, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent is King.—Amen. Alleluia.”

These fast sermons procured him the respect of many eminent persons; among others, his friendship was sought by Charles Polhill, esq. of Chepstead Place, in Kent; and a passage from one of them was quoted by Mr. Erskine, on the famous trial of Payne.

In the summer of 1782, Mr. Cappe was attacked by the influenza. He had several relapses, and in the November following was siezed with a fever, from which his recovery was not expected, and in consequence of which he was confined to his room, and bed, several weeks. In this fever he was attended with the greatest kindness and assiduity by his two medical friends in this city, the late Dr. Swainston and the late Dr. Hunter, and by his eldest son, who sat up with him nine nights in succession.

It was his constant custom to mark carefully the current of events in order to extract from them such important reflections as might be useful to himself or others; and having now risen as it were from the margin of the grave, on his happy return to his ministerial labours, after an absence of eleven

weeks, he gladly seized the occasion, in a manner peculiarly his own, of showing forth the goodness of God, when he wounds as well as when he heals. These sermons form the concluding part of this volume.

Mr. Cappe had long been solicited to make a selection of psalms, corrected by himself for publick worship. In the year 1785, he complied with this request, and the selection was published in 1786. It was adopted by his own congregation in this city, by that of Mr. Wood of Leeds, Mr. Turner of Newcastle, and some others; but as it was not advertised in any of the publick papers, it could not be noticed by the periodical prints, and consequently was never much known. The principles on which this selection of psalms were made, are stated in the preface; of which the leading ones are, accuracy of sentiment, and care to avoid all such peculiarities of opinion as might prevent any conscientious christian from joining in the use of them.* To these

* I shall give a specimen of this in the 32d psalm of the first book, from the version of Dr. Watts, of the 17th psalm of David; in which, among lesser alterations, the last stanza is so constructed, that it may be used by all Christians, whatever may be their peculiar opinions respecting the period when a future life shall commence, whether immediately on the termination of the present scene, or not until a general judgment.

PSALM XXXII.

Christian Resignation and Hope.

Lord I am thine, and thou wilt prove,
My faith, my patience, and my love :

psalms is prefixed an explication of some scriptural terms, and phrases which occur in them.

In the February of 1788, the writer of these memoirs became a member of Mr. Cappe's family: As he had not at this time any pupils, and from that and other causes, having more leisure than formerly, he was prevailed upon, after some time, by his newly-acquired amanuensis, to dictate now and then for half an hour, when fatigued with more laborious occupation, from his corrected short-hand, with a view to publication. His general state of health had suffered extremely from too great mental exertion, although he had always taken horse-exercise whenever the weather

What e'er the trial, I'll complain
Of nought thy wisdom shall ordain.

What sinners value I resign;
Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine:
I shall behold thee face to face,
And stand complete in righteousness.

This life's a dream, a transient show;
The eternal world to which I go,
Hath joys substantial and sincere,
When shall I wake and find me there?

O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near, and like my God!
And flesh and sin no more controul
The sacred pleasures of the soul.

The change will come: this active mind
To earth's dark scenes no more confin'd,
Shall burst the chains with glad surprise,
And in the Saviour's image rise.

would permit ; but even in these rides his mind was still actively employed ; in them, many of his sermons were, in great measure, composed. The study of the scriptures, as already mentioned, was ever his supreme delight. For more than forty years he never went any where unaccompanied by a pocket Greek Testament, in which it was his custom to mark down hints, as they occurred to him, of whatever might strike his mind, as meriting farther consideration, upon pieces of card, or small slips of paper, or upon a slate table ; these hints were from time to time examined, and at length formed into a rough draft. He then dismissed that particular subject for some time from his mind, in order that he might apply to it anew with more vigour and effect ; and it was not till after he had fully weighed every, the most minute circumstance, in all its bearings and connexions, that the dissertation was transcribed a third time correctly in short-hand. Considering the gospel as of the highest importance to the happiness of man, both here and hereafter, it is literally true, that he experienced more delight of heart in the elucidation of an obscure passage, in removing a difficulty, or reconciling an apparent contradiction, than he would have done, if put in possession of every thing which the children of this world consider as most desirable. " Rejoice with me," he would often say, when coming from his study with brightened looks, and a more

highly animated countenance, "for I think I have discovered the true meaning of a passage, which I never understood before !"

Much, however, as he delighted in critical research, subjects of this sort were seldom the topics of his publick teaching. Holiness of heart, and life, he considered as of first importance ; and to the attainment and cultivation of these, his discourses in the pulpit, of which the few that are given in this volume are a fair specimen, were principally directed.

In the February of 1791, Mr. Cappe's resignation and fortitude was put to a most severe trial, by the death of his eldest son, Dr. Joseph Cappe ; an instance of whose filial piety has been already mentioned. He had studied medicine in London and Edinburgh, had taken his degree at Leyden, and had fixed his residence in this city a few months before his death. He was a young man of great virtue, peculiarly eminent for accuracy and distinctness of perception, soundness of judgment, and solidity of mind. He possessed extensive knowledge, adorned by a lively imagination ; and had been the confidential companion and friend of his honoured father, under the pressure of many a domestick sorrow, in which his brothers and sisters were too young, at the time, to participate.

It fell to the lot of the writer of these memoirs, to acquaint Mr. Cappe with this most afflictive event. It was in the morning, before he had risen :—" Leave me a moment," he said, " if you please ;" and in less than half an hour, he dressed himself, came down stairs, and calling the family as usual to morning prayer, he poured out his soul in the presence of his Maker, in a strain of humble confidence, and of pious resignation, never to be forgotten. He endured on this occasion every thing that the acutest sensibility, and the most ardent affection for the son he had lost, could inflict ; yet his fortitude never forsook him : it supported him even to the grave of his beloved son, where he himself performed the funeral service three days after, late in the evening, accompanied only by the necessary attendants. This painful effort the writer of these memoirs would gladly have prevented ; " I received him from God," was his answer, " and to him I must resign him." So composed was his mind after this trying service, and so attentive was he, even in circumstances like these, to the feelings of others, that apprehending her mother, then much in years, might suffer from her anxiety on his account, he sent his clerk to inform her immediately after the whole was over, that he was very well.

It has been already mentioned, that it was the habit of Mr. Cappe, to mark carefully the

current of events, and to extract from them such reflections, as might be useful to himself or others.

I shall make a few extracts from two discourses, preached by him, on hearing of the early death of a young gentleman of considerable hopes and expectations, who had been his pupil, and was well known to many in his congregation, on the following text :—"What is your life? It is even as a vapour, it appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." How far the animation of the preacher could give interest to a subject, which however important, is so familiar to us, (for we all know that life is often short, and that it is always uncertain,) the reader will be able in some measure, from these extracts, to appreciate.

After an appropriate introduction, and an animated address to the testimony of the aged, even in respect of their experience of the shortness of life, he thus proceeds : "Ask them to look back upon the scenes through which they have passed, upon the years which they have spent ; entreat them to tell you in what light they see them ; attend unto their answer, for with the aged there is wisdom. What is it they reply? They confirm the oracle of God ; the weaver's shuttle, they say, is not more swift ; the shooting star is not more momentary, evanescent, and unreal.".... "Some of you may consult your children, in-

stead of advising with your fathers ; and *all* of you, I believe, may ask your brethren, if the time be not very short. The registers of the dead are not unfaithful ; they cannot err ; they are not interested ; consult the registers of the dead. Look upon the tombs, are their inhabitants all old ? No, not all ; many ? No, not many ; the aged are a thinly scattered number. Infants there are, who have been born to weep and die ; babes there are, who in all their sportive innocence, have gone down into the grave ; youths there are, who in their gayest hours, and amidst the most pleasurable scenes, have been recalled to lie down in darkness, and the dust. Numbers too there are, who in the pride of manhood, the maturity of life, in the full career of business and of hope, have been eased of all their anxieties, and defeated of all their expectations, and fast bound in the fetters of death.—The young lie thick as dew-drops on the ground ; here and there only do we find a monument erected unto years and wisdom ; we wonder when we find it, and yet this our wonder does not cure us of our security and confidence.”....“ Perhaps, even now, the scythe of time is lifted up to cut down those who little think of it, who are expecting the departure of their friends, or preparing to convey their fathers to the tomb.”.....“ To-morrow, that idol deity in which the world have agreed to place their trust ; to-morrow, that hair-spun thread, on which they hang the

weighty concerns of eternity, what is to-morrow? No part of our possessions, no part of our inheritance; it is a part in the great chain of duration, but perhaps no part of *our* present being. Clear and bright, and steady as it shines to-day, some sudden blast may blow out the lamp of life; and to-morrow may have conveyed us into other company, and settled us in other scenes. ‘Boast not,’ my friends, ‘of to-morrow,’ till you have unrolled the book of fate, and learnt what to-day shall bring forth.”.....“Last night, it is probable, many a gay youth threw himself upon the bed, whence he shall arise no more; and many a busy head reposed itself on that pillow, where it shall sleep on now, and take its rest. How sad and serious are many now, who but last night were giddy, thoughtless, presumptuous, and vain; how terrible has this to-morrow proved to many, who but yesterday said unto themselves that it was yet soon enough to repent and be converted? ‘Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,’ was a short, a severe, and yet a gracious warning.”.....“In every breeze that blows, there is a flight of human fates; in every breath we breathe, we may drink in the deadly poison; every hour we stand in jeopardy, then ‘verily every man at his best estate, is altogether vanity.’ In every walk we take, death treads upon our steps; he watches us in our retirements, he follows us in our business, he mingles with the angels that stand

round our beds ; in that very moment, when our hearts are most attached to the world ; in that very moment when we are least apprehensive of our fate, then the tyrant springs upon his prey, rejoicing to add unto his native horrors, the accessory terrors of surprise. ‘ In the midst of life, we are in death ;’ in the bloom of life, we are in danger of some fatal blight ; in the highest health, we may be nearest to some mortal malady. What then is your life ? Is it not a fleeting cloud, an evaporating smoke, an exploding meteor, a painted bubble ? Break the bubble must ; in its greatest beauty it will break, and it may break ere night.”

Of the uses to be made of these reflections on the shortness and uncertainty of life, he thus speaks :.....“ If life be so short, and so uncertain, then ought we not to be prodigal of time ?....When you can arrest the passing moments, then you may abuse them ; when you can say that you have finished the work of life, then you may amuse yourselves. Of our honour we are jealous, of our wealth we are parsimonious, of our labour we are frugal, but our time we waste upon the follies, we waste it on the pleasures, we waste it on the cares of this life ; we give it unto every one that asks it of us ; nor are we sensible of our extravagance, perhaps, till the world cannot purchase us another hour. Time was given us, that we might buy with it the blessings of

eternity ; as the revenue comes in, we expend it on the vanities of *this* world ; and when we should enter on that glorious inheritance, we find ourselves poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.”*

During the summer of the year 1790, Mr. Cappe had had many threatnings of a paralytick attack, but the awful blow was suspended until the 2d of May, 1791 ; a morning ever to be remembered by the writer of these memoirs, when this friend of her heart, to whose great and fine qualities she was perhaps too ardently attached, was suddenly seized with a dreadful stroke of the palsy ! He had taken a ride to a neighbouring village to baptize a child, and the morning being fine, had afterwards prolonged his ride, when suddenly, in a sandy lane, finding his head extremely uncomfortable, he threw himself from his

* I was much struck and affected by reading a volume of Poems published by Dr. Aikin in 1803, written by the late Henry Moore, a fellow student of Mr. Cappe's at Northampton. The strain of sentiment that generally runs through them is so much in the manner of Mr. Cappe, that I could have supposed them to have been written by himself. How strongly, for instance, did the following passage in the Ode to Contentment bring his image to my mind !

Divine Contentment ! still be nigh
To cheer me with thy placid eye.
While thro' this fleeting Life's short various day
A humble Pilgrim here I plod my way,
May no ambitious dreams delude my mind,
Impatience hence be far—and far be Pride ;
Whate'er my lot, on Heav'n's kind care reclin'd,
Be Piety my comfort—Faith my guide.

horse, and was found almost immediately after, by a neighbouring gentleman, the faithful animal standing by him, as if conscious of his master's situation. The circumstance of the deep sand in the lane, preserved him from being injured by the fall ; but his life, notwithstanding, was despaired of for many weeks. At length, it pleased the Almighty in some measure to restore him ; but although he continued afterwards to read and to compose occasionally, yet he was never able again to resume his ministerial labours.

In the summer of 1792, he was so far recovered, as to make a visit, accompanied by myself, to his old friend Mr. Lee, (at Staindrop, in the county of Durham,) then in a very declining state of health, but still in full possession of his extraordinary conversational talents. We were met there by Mr. Constable of Wassand ; and, by a singular coincidence of circumstances, by Sir Wadsworth Buske also, at that time resident in the Isle of Man. Sir W. Buske did not know that his two other friends were at Staindrop ; but being at Harrogate, and wishing to visit Mr. Lee, his arrival was unexpectedly announced one morning at breakfast, just after it had been remarked by Mrs. Lee, that the three old friends wanted only the addition of Sir Wadsworth Buske ; to complete their happiness !

On the 7th of April, in the year 1793, Mr. Cappe had a second paralytick seizure, which, although it affected him differently, was not less severe than the first, and by which his life was again for many weeks in the most imminent danger ; and from this he never so far recovered as to be able to walk without considerable assistance, or to speak without difficulty and pain. In circumstances like these, it might seem to many, that his life was no longer desirable ; but these saw only how much was lost ; they did not know in how many ways he could still administer to the comfort and happiness of others ; and how ample were the stores of enjoyment and of hope, that remained to himself. He could still instruct, by exemplifying, in practice, the efficacy of those divine precepts of resignation and fortitude, which, in theory, he had so often and so ably taught ; and those who loved him had still the consolation of endeavouring to lighten his burdens, and of anticipating his wishes. The powers of recollection were still spared him, and they brought with them the constant testimony of a life well spent. Although he could no longer laboriously explore, and endeavour to bring to light the treasures of knowledge that lie hidden in the sacred volume, its precepts, its consolations, and its hopes, were engraven on his heart, and of these, disease did not deprive him. It was even still permitted him to labour in the vineyard of his honoured Master,

by dictating from his short-hand papers to an amanuensis, who could have no pleasure in this world equal to the effort of contributing to his happiness, and of being instrumental to the preservation of papers which she deemed so inestimable. Some hours in almost every day, for nearly nine years, were dedicated to this employment, to which all others were made to give way; and so ample were the stores from which these treasures were drawn, that although many volumes have been transcribed, together with an harmony and notes on the whole New Testament, many more remain locked up in an unintelligible short-hand. Among these the editor regrets principally, his notes upon Dr. Hartley's Observations on Man; a work which Mr. Cappe had closely studied, and estimated very highly, and of which it was his intention to have published a new edition. These notes, which are extremely numerous, unfortunately had not advanced beyond a short-hand rough draft, which was to have been again revised, and many of them are written with a pencil, which made the reading of them attended with difficulty; so that he was never equal to the labour of doing it, and of correcting, arranging, and re-transcribing.

It is well known, during the period of which we are speaking, that infidelity was not only professed openly in a neighbouring nation, but that in this country also, if it did not avow it-

self in terms quite so direct, Christianity was treated by many writers of sufficient celebrity, with studied neglect.* Painfully impressed by these circumstances, I adverted to the apprehensions they excited, as I was transcribing the reasons assigned by Mr. Cappe, to believe even from *present appearances*, that Christianity would finally prevail; and asked him if it might not be well to intermingle some reflections on events then taking place?† “By no means,” he replied, “depend upon it, these are only passing clouds, not worth the

* This fashionable mode of treating Christianity by a certain class of writers, or rather of passing it over in profound silence, is thus well adverted to, by an able female writer of the present day.—“Avowed attacks upon revelation are more easily resisted, because the malignity is advertised. But who suspects the destruction which lurks under the harmless or instructive names, of *General History, Natural History, Travels, Voyages, Lives, Encyclopedias, Criticism, and Romances*? Who will deny that many of these works contain much admirable matter; brilliant passages, important facts, just descriptions, faithful pictures of nature, and valuable illustrations of science? But while ‘the dead fly lies at the bottom,’ the whole will exhale a corrupt and pestilential stench.” Mrs. Hannah More’s *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, Vol. I, pages 31, 32.

† One of the passages alluded to, is as follows. Having enumerated some of the difficulties which the gospel had to encounter on its first promulgation, and of the probabilities at that time against its success, Mr. Cappe observes. “In the circumstances of the gospel now, there are no such reasons to apprehend its extinction, or confinement.” (viz. to an obscure province, like Judea.) “The increasing facility and extent of human intercourse, the growing comprehension of the human understanding; the improved liberality of human sentiments; the wide distribution of the gospel records; the acknowledged excellence of the gospel morality; the advancing separation of the corruptions that had been intermingled with it from the truth as it is in Jesus; the debates that have arisen concerning its evidences and its doctrines, which have been the means of placing them in the clearest light, and fixing them upon their true foundation; all these things conspire to suggest and to support the assured hope, that the gates of death never shall prevail against the word of Jesus.” *Dissertations*, Vol. I, pages 126, 127.

notice." And indeed it is remarkable, that the unanimity of his mind was never for a moment disturbed by them, for he well knew on whom he had believed; and may I not here be allowed to remark, that already, even in the short interval of seven years, these "passing clouds" are beginning to vanish away? The substitution of philosophy, falsely so called, (for genuine philosophy is her steadfast friend) in place of Christianity, has not produced all the glorious effects that were predicted of its advent.—The inhabitants of a neighbouring nation are not become of all others, the most enlightened, the most free, or the most happy;* and if it has failed in this world, where its laurels avowedly were to be reaped, it will not be affirmed that it has any indemnification to offer in the contemplation of another, in which it professes not to believe, and for which it is altogether unprepared.

Among the pleasures of which Mr. Cappe was never wholly deprived, those must be reckoned which resulted from the contemplation of the works, as well as of the word of God. Although unable to walk, or to ride

* If this were true in the year 1805, what shall we say of the state of that miserable country at the present day 1816? Let the foreign armies that live upon her plains;—the total loss of all serious thought and moral principle in the bulk of her people;—the wretched debasing superstition of her rulers and pharisaical priesthood;—together with the cruel sword of persecution drawn in its defence, bearing their united testimony to her complete degradation, give the answer.—EDITOR.

on horseback, he was drawn in a little carriage, when the weather would permit, in the open air, where he could enjoy the pleasures of spring, and watch the progress of vegetation. Still he could admire the glories of a setting sun, in the contemplation of which he had ever had the greatest pleasure ; enjoy the fragrance of the evening breeze ; gaze with calm delight on the vaulted canopy of heaven, studded with innumerable worlds ; and join with Milton in his elevated hymn of praise—

“ These are thy wond’rous works,
Parent of good : thus wond’rous fair,
Thyself how wond’rous then !”

To say that he never discovered any fretfulness ; that he never once repined at the dispensations of Providence ; that he never once regretted the powers he had lost ; (although he was fully sensible of their loss, “ I once knew a little,” he was accustomed to say !) would be to fall very short of a true representation of his actual state of mind, which was always composed, serene, and cheerful, and on which was constantly impressed a sense of gratitude, of thankfulness, and of praise.

In him surely we see an example supplying the most powerful incentive, even were this world only concerned, to the diligent cultivation, and faithful improvement of our seve-

ral talents, whatever they may be. Had the early days of the character under contemplation been consumed, we will not say in vice, but in the pursuit of those objects which the men of this world seek after, of pleasure, of ambition, or of gain, would such have been his resources in the day of trial? Would such have been the hope, that, amidst the storm and tempest, can repose, with full security, on the "Rock of Ages?" So true it is, that "to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:" So true it is, generally speaking, even in respect of what relates to the present scene, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!"

Among his many remaining comforts, Mr. Cappe always reckoned in the foremost rank, the having met with a colleague,* in whom he early discovered an ardent love of truth, especially of religious truth; talents equal to its development, and dispositions the most amiable. He felt for him a truly paternal affection; often did he please himself with anticipating what he believed would be his future eminence: and he always looked forward to him as his successor in his ministerial office in this city, with singular complacency and satisfaction.

In the night of the 16th of September, 1799, Mr. Cappe had a third paralytick attack;

* The Rev. Charles Wellbeloved.

which, although it did not, like the two foregoing, seem to threaten immediate dissolution, yet so greatly impaired his remaining bodily powers, so affected his articulation, and weakened his whole frame, that we were obliged, in a great measure, ever after to lay aside the occupation of transcribing, which had hitherto been the source of so much pleasure and consolation. Still, however, his resignation, his fortitude, and his cheerfulness remained. That what had happened to him was the will of his heavenly Father, was ground sufficient not of acquiescence merely, but of firm persuasion, that it was the best that could have been, both for himself and others. Even his countenance lost nothing of its wonted composure and benignity: he was prevailed upon, after this, to have his picture taken, which fortunately bears a strong likeness: and now that the original is no longer present, it is soothing to the sorrowing mind, to be able, by this means, to call to its remembrance in a more vivid form, the piety, resignation, and benevolence that was ever depicted in the living prototype.

Mr. Scott of Amwell was one of his favourite poets, and the "Elegy on the Approach of Winter," his favourite piece. With what pleasure did he quote the following stanzas, where the poet, speaking of contentment, says,

" She finds in winter many a view to please ;
The morning landscape fringed with frost-work gay,
The sun at noon seen through the leafless trees,
The clear calm ether at the close of day :
She bids, for all, our grateful praise arise,
To Him, whose mandate spake the world to form ;
Gave Spring's gay bloom, and Summer's cheerful skies,
And Autumn's corn-clad field, and Winter's sounding storm."

Within the last few months of his life, his sight failed exceedingly. "I believe I shall be quite blind," he often said to me ; and on my replying, "I hope not," his answer constantly was, "I have neither hope nor fear upon the subject, and do not you fear. I mention it," he continued, "merely as a fact, not as a subject of regret."

About the middle of December, 1800, he appeared to have caught cold, but it was not attended by any symptoms that created much unusual alarm. His breathing, indeed, when in a recumbent posture, was difficult, but it had frequently been so ever since his last paralytick attack. On Monday the 22d, a gentleman called upon him, whom he had not seen for many years ; and being forcibly struck and affected by his extreme feebleness, he said to him, "What great alterations, sir, have taken place since we last met !" "It is true," he replied, "great alterations have taken place, yet, I assure you, I never was happier in my life ;" and he then enumerated the many blessings he still possessed. At night he

had a shivering fit, after which he sunk rapidly ; and, about two o'clock, on the morning of the 24th of December, without a groan or a sigh, he ended his earthly pilgrimage. He appeared to be perfectly sensible to the last, and fully conscious of his own situation ; thanked every one, repeatedly, for their attention to him, and several times added something more, which it was evident, from his manner, was of the consolatory kind to his sorrowing attendants ; but his articulation was so imperfect, that it could not be understood.

If the reader of these memoirs has ever possessed such a friend, and has experienced what it is to see his place vacant, he will then comprehend what are the feelings of the writer of them ! To such an one, how inestimable are the hopes, the promises of the gospel ! Well did our blessed Lord understand their unspeakable value, when, in one of his beautifully prophetick parables, anticipating the future fates of the gospel, he compares it to a pearl of great price, which, being found by a merchantman, he went and sold all that he had, to purchase it !—"The gospel lives, though the preachers of the gospel die. In that there is no change, the everlasting gospel is its name. No vicissitudes of private life, no civil tumults, no publick revolutions, can injure or endanger it. What a consolation ! It has comforted our departed friends.

When we are dead, it will comfort our surviving relatives. It will guide the living, and sustain the dying, till that glorious period of the Divine Administration shall arrive, when sin, and pain, and death, shall be no more."*
Amen. Alleluia !

YORK, May 19, 1805.

* Mr. Cappe's Sermon on the death of Mr. Sandercock, 1770.



DISCOURSE I.

ON FAITH IN GENERAL, AND RELIGIOUS FAITH IN PARTICULAR.

HEBREWS xi. 1.

Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen.

FAITH in general is any kind of persuasion, proceeding from testimony concerning any thing whatever, that is not the immediate object of our own consciousness, or of our own senses. Whatever truths we hold upon the evidence of sense or consciousness, or by necessary consequences legitimately deduced, these truths we *know*: on the other hand, whatever truths we derive from any other source; be it from the relation of others, or by rational deductions from their depositions, these truths we *believe*. The result of the former principles, is knowledge; the effect of the latter, faith. Religious knowledge is very seldom distinguished from religious faith; and for the ordinary purposes of life, in the regulation of our temper, and the direction of our conduct, there is no need of such distinctions. In fact, the far greater and more interesting part of our religious principles is derived from Faith; yet such is the degree of evidence resulting from the testimony of Christ and his Apostles, respecting those truths which we receive through them, that our faith in these, approaches as near as may be unto knowledge.

Religious Faith is properly that conviction concerning past, future, or unseen things, relating to God, his will, his counsels, or his providence, which is produced in us, by the testimony of prophets whom he hath sent and authorized.

This it is in respect to its nature and its origin; and in respect to its effects, the Apostle tells us, that "it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." Though the version be somewhat obscure, yet the original is sufficiently perspicuous, but the terms of it are of such a nature, that without circumlocution it would have been impossible perhaps to have expressed the sense of the passage more perfectly than in the words of the text. It is not however, so properly a philosophical definition of Faith, as, according to the manner of this Apostle, a rhetorical encomium on it. "Faith," says he, "is that act of the mind, which makes things hoped for, *to be*; it is that principle which places things unseen, in a clear, convincing, and affecting light. It gives to future things a reality in respect to us, which if we were devoid of this principle, however certain in themselves, they would not have." And having said so much of Faith, he goes on to enlarge his affirmation, and to amplify the excellence of his subject, by extending what he had already affirmed concerning the objects of hope, to whatever things which are not in themselves the objects of our senses, whether past, present, or to come.

Faith is the great principle of the Christian life, for it is in every sense true, that the Christian walks by faith and not by sight; he is neither governed by the things of this present world, nor does he yet see all the things which are the objects of his prin-

cipal attention, affection, and pursuit. The wise and good, under the patriarchal, and Jewish dispensations, walked by faith; and accordingly the Apostle goes on to celebrate the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and others; characters in preceding ages, whose virtues had adorned the times and dispensations under which they lived.*

Even in the Gentile world, which had no other notion of invisible and future things, than what was derived from the light of nature, aided perhaps by the remains of primitive tradition, those who restrained their appetites and passions respecting sensible things, and present interests, from a reverence of an unseen law-giver and observer of their conduct; from the fear of an invisible judge; from the hope that by this means heaven would be rendered propitious to them; however obscure, imperfect, or even unjust their ideas, either of the divine nature, providence, or of that future world, might be; these persons, notwithstanding, walked by Faith.

Faith in Christ, is a firm persuasion that whatever he hath declared is true, and this is the great difference between the faith of Christians and the faith of others:—That the Faith of Christians, if it be founded on the word of God and correspond to the truth as it is in Jesus, is more extensive, purer, and more lively; that it embraces a greater number of interesting and important truths, concerning un-

* The cultivation of this important principle is not merely in itself a virtue as a proof of our trust and confidence in the promises of God, but becomes eventually the parent of many other virtues, by its powerful tendency to enlarge and spiritualize the human mind; by teaching it to contemplate our present actions in their future consequences, and thus firmly to withstand the influence of those delusive seductions, which, without its aid, would so often make shipwreck of good conscience, of respectability, of hope, and of happiness!—EDITOR.

seen, past, and future things; and that, although it must in some instances be attended with obscurity, because the objects it embraces are but in part revealed, yet that it is not in any instance debased with error; and also, that being supported by a much stronger evidence, it is naturally more productive of all good fruit, and is a steadier, as well as a more active principle of conduct.

Faith changes the fugitive and visionary nature of things unseen, whether past, present, or to come, into something more fixed and more substantial: it transports us back into the past, and interests us in the events of a thousand ages that had elapsed before we were called into being. It gives us to behold that important moment, when the Lord spake and it was done; when he commanded, and all things stood fast; and fills our souls with those delightful sentiments of wonder, reverence, and love, that would have seized them, had we been present when this glorious universe, at his command, burst into existence; when the morning stars sang together, and the first born sons of God shouted aloud for joy. Faith displays before our eyes the secret government of God, and shows us how uncontrollable he is, how wise, how just, and how kind in all his dispensations, whether of the natural, the civil, or the moral world. Faith sets before us that most consolatory and delightful scene, the great and good Father of all continually superintending all his works, watching over every creature he has made, interested even for the falling sparrow, and counting the very hairs of the human head!

We see him adorning even this scene of discipline with innumerable beauties; blessing even this childhood of our being with innumerable entertain-

ments and delights ; dispensing to us our condition during the little period of our sojourning on earth, with all the tenderness and all the liberality that consists with our safe arrival in that better world to which we go, and with our interests in that unchangeable and everlasting state. We see this holy God, even when clouds and darkness are round about him, still smiling through the cloud upon his faithful children, lifting up the light of his countenance upon them, and preparing to reward them with a crown of life. Faith shows us this almighty Monarch, to purify the iniquity of the world, breaking up the fountains of the deep, and opening the windows of heaven. Faith shows us this Avenger of unrighteousness bringing down a fiery tempest on the cities of the plain : Faith shows us this Hope and Confidence of his people, dividing the waters of the sea to preserve the armies of Israel, and instantly bringing back the waters that he had divided, for the destruction of Pharaoh and his host.

By Faith we see this God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in sending Abraham from his country and his father's house ; in changing the intended death of Joseph into servitude in Egypt ; in visiting the fruitful country of Canaan with famine ; in settling the house of Jacob in the land of Egypt ; in multiplying his posterity in that settlement ; in subjecting them to the tyranny of cruel and oppressive princes ; in preserving Moses to be their deliverer ; in the plagues by him inflicted to obtain for them the deliverance they sought ; in the law that was given them at Sinai ; in the peculiar constitution under which they were at last settled in the promised land ; in all the revolutions of the Jewish state ; in their prosperities and their afflictions ; in their independence and their servitude ;

in the various fates of many powerful kingdoms with which they were occasionally connected:—in all these events we see by Faith the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, rewarding the virtues and chastising the vices both of individuals and of nations; exhibiting the most striking evidence that he ruleth in the kingdom of men; displaying an example of his moral government; and making straight the way for the gospel of his Son to have free course and be glorified.

By Faith we hear the great Arbiter of events, who sees the end from the beginning, one while to reclaim the nations from their iniquities, warning them of the evils with which he is about to visit them; and another while, to support and comfort his repenting people in their troubles, revealing to them the deliverances he is about to accomplish for them; and all along from period to period, through a long succession of ages and generations, promising in plainer and still plainer terms, and describing in clearer and still clearer characters, that illustrious personage who should spread the knowledge of God, even unto the ends of the earth; who should put an end to sin, bring in an everlasting righteousness, and erect a kingdom that should never cease.

Faith introduces us into the fields of Bethlehem, opens our ears unto the Angels' anthem, and displays before us all the wonderful events that accompanied the birth of this prince of peace. By Faith we are present at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; we hear the divine discourses that he addressed unto the multitude, and are admitted to that more intimate communion that he held with his immediate disciples. By Faith we behold

the sick reviving at his touch ; the lame leaping at his word ; the blind gazing with astonishment at that powerful friend by whom they had regained their sight ; and the dead rising from their graves to bless the Abolisher of death. By Faith we see him tried, condemned, and crucified ; dying, in the exercise of the divinest virtue, a malefactor's death upon the cross. By Faith we see him sleeping in the tomb, rising from the dead according to his own prediction, satisfying the doubts of his disciples and ascending in their presence, as he said he should do, to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God.

By Faith we see the angelick guard, that attended our ascending Lord, and hear the promise which they left to the disciples, " this same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as he was seen to go thither." Faith opens to us the eternal gates, draws back the veil that separates between earth and heaven, and extends our prospect far beyond the region of the shadow of death ; brings us into the city of the living God ; shows us there the blessed Jesus, for his obedience unto death, crowned with glory and honour, and seated at the right hand of the majesty on high. She shows us there, the innumerable company of Angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, settled in the presence of our heavenly Father ; and enables us, imperfectly it is true, but in some degree enables us, to anticipate the happiness of so blessed a communion. Faith has the power to bring forward that future happiness to make glad the present hour. As Faith penetrates into that which is within the veil whither the fore-runner is for us entered, so before her eye also, hell is naked, and destruction has no covering.

Through Faith we may even now enjoy that happy day, when by the power of the gospel, peace, and truth, and virtue prevailing throughout the world, shall spread their blessed influences from one end of the earth to the other.—By Faith we anticipate the glorious period when the great destroyer, Death, himself shall be destroyed. Through Faith we can already feel somewhat of that ecstatic triumph that will seize us, when waking from the bed of death, we shall behold the face of God in righteousness, and at length be satisfied with his perfect likeness.

Such are the forepast scenes that Faith brings back to us; such are the invisible transactions that Faith discovers to us; such are the great futurities that it places in a distinct and striking view. Does the Apostle say too much of faith? is he too lavish in its praise? is he too sanguine in commending it? If such things, so deeply interesting to us, have been, and are, and are to be, things which our senses cannot reach, who would not be thankful for being made capable of that principle by which they are revealed unto us? who would not be thankful that we are not left to dark, and dubious, and vague conjectures concerning subjects so important as the origin, and government, and end of all things? that we are not bewildering ourselves in wild imaginations, nor fleeting from uncertainty to uncertainty?

Let us then use the privileges that we praise; while we bless him for those clear discoveries and overpowering evidences that have so well defined, and so firmly fixed, our conceptions of invisible and future things, let us live as they ought to live, who know that they came out of the hands of God, that they are the subjects of his government, and are going hence to his tribunal.

PRAYER.

O LORD God Almighty, we believe that from thee we derived our being, with all its powers, its comforts, and its hopes ; we believe that we continually act in thy presence, and under thy inspection, "who art acquainted with all our ways;" we believe that we are accountable unto thee for all our conduct, and that the day is coming, when thou shalt judge the world in righteousness, and when all shall receive according to their deeds.

We lament before thee, heavenly Father, that this our most holy faith has in times past produced no greater influence on our affections and our conversation. In time to come may it bring forth fruits meet unto repentance ! May we be more thankful unto thee from whose bounty all our blessings flow, and more resigned unto thy will, without whom not an atom changes its place throughout the boundless universe ! In all our conduct may we behave as seeing thee who art invisible. May we admit nothing into our hearts that we could desire to conceal from thy all penetrating eye ; nothing into our conduct of which we shall have cause to be ashamed at thy righteous tribunal ! "The life that we now live in the flesh, may it be by the faith of the son of God," and may we add unto our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, that these things being in us and abounding, we may not be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, but may in all things adorn the sacred doctrine we profess.

DISCOURSE II.

FAITH A REASONABLE PRINCIPLE.

HEBREWS xi. 1.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.

FAITH is a reasonable principle. There is nothing dark, mysterious, or unintelligible in it ; nothing for which he who values himself most upon the character of reason, has any cause to be ashamed. It is not an enthusiastick principle that first gives being to dreams and visions, and then supports itself upon imaginations of its own creating. It is not a supernatural impression proceeding from the immediate agency of God, capriciously bestowed where he pleases to bestow it, and denied where he wills it to be denied. It is not an inexplicable feeling of we know not what, conceived we know not how, and cherished we know not why : it is not the persuasion of any thing, whether good or evil, concerning either ourselves or any other being, taken up without reason, and maintained upon principles that may not be duly specified and explained : it is not any sudden irradiation of the mind, proceeding from whatever cause ; for Faith is not more the especial gift of God, than Sight ; it is equally the natural and necessary result of the principles that compose the human frame.—To an eye duly formed, present any object of the visi-

ble world, and it is seen: to a mind attentive and undepraved, propose the evidence concerning any truth that respects the world invisible, concerning either distant objects, past transactions, or events yet to come, and in proportion to the strength of that evidence, it is *believed*. Whatever persuasion is taken up against evidence or without it, is blind presumption, or romantick imagination, and not Faith.

Faith is as much the effect of evidence, as sight is the effect of sensible impression; nor is the one more absolutely dependent on its cause, or more closely connected with it, than the other. It is a law of our nature, that in such and such circumstances, we shall see; and it is as much a law of our nature, that in such and such circumstances, we shall believe. If we will be judging of such visible things as are beyond the sphere of clear and distinct vision, no man would call these presumptuous fancies, however strongly we might be attached to them, sight; and in like manner, if we would be judging of things invisible, to which the light of evidence does not reach, no man should call these visions of imagination, Faith: they are both of them the reveries of a capricious or disordered mind; a partial frenzy, which only requires to be extended to a greater multitude of objects, to render the perversion of our understandings both manifest and deplorable.—What sight is in the natural world, with respect to things visible and present, Faith is in the spiritual world, with respect to things absent and invisible: to believe, on sufficient evidence, is as natural as to perceive; and in thus believing, there is nothing more unreasonable, inexplicable, or indefensible, than in seeing with our open eyes the prospect that presents itself before us.

Faith then is a principle no more peculiar to religion in general, than it is peculiar to the Christian religion in particular. Even those, who most affect to treat it with ridicule and contempt in the disciples of Christ, are themselves obliged, and they are satisfied with the obligation, to act upon it every day and every hour of their lives: it is the very principle which, in the ordinary affairs of life, regulates and governs by far the greater part of their thoughts, their affections, and their conduct.

Do they really *know* every thing that they think they know, in their domestick, their commercial, or their civil concerns and occupations? Let them examine those things of which they have the firmest persuasion, as they think the most infallible certainty, and they will find very few of them that are objects of sense or consciousness: they are not *known*, they are only *believed*.

Do they *know*, that the food to which they are sat down is safe and salutary? or do they refuse to partake of what they have not with their own hands prepared, for fear of disgracing the character of reason?—Do they *know* that the medicine administered to them in sickness, is composed of useful or innocent ingredients? do they *know* that these are faithfully prepared, and judiciously combined? or, for fear of doing an unreasonable thing, for fear of exposing themselves to ridicule or censure, do they refuse to take it till they have carefully examined the composition, and have themselves been witness of the effects, in experiments on others?

They sit down at night, planning schemes of business or of pleasure for the morrow; laying themselves, it may be, under obligations and engage-

ments for a long time to come : Do they *see* the sun hastening to bring back the returning day ? do they *know* that the scythe of death is yet far distant from them ? are they *certain* what a day may bring forth ? can they *see* through the darkness of the night, what shall be on the morrow ?—Does any man deny obedience to the civil powers because he has never *seen* them ? Does the tradesman act unreasonably in preparing his merchandise before he *sees* the buyer coming ? Is it any mark of weakness or of folly in him, that he buys, with no better security that he shall sell again, than what he may know in general respecting the wants, the dispositions, and the customs of mankind ? Is it any thing ridiculous for the merchant to send orders to distant countries, for commodities which he has been only *told*, by those who have only *heard*, and who perhaps are themselves interested in making the declaration, that such commodities are produced there ? Must he go himself to the ends of the earth, before he can with any degree of reason transmit his merchandise into these countries, because he has no other persuasion but what *testimony* has created in him, that there are agents there, who may be trusted to transact his business, and inhabitants to consume, or use what he may send thither ? Must the husbandman *try* his seed, before he can be justified in sowing it, and lose a season in experiments upon its fruitfulness, before he can reasonably venture on the expectation of a harvest from it ?

In all these, and in a thousand other instances, Faith is the principle upon which men resolve and act ; there is no other principle that has so constant and extensive an influence upon them. You cannot even go to a place where you have never been, but it is by Faith you go thither. You

cannot seek a person you have never seen, but it is by Faith you seek him: the most trivial and most important actions of our lives are almost all equally dependent on it.

Even our *moral conduct*, in the most serious and the most momentous instances, rests on Faith as its foundation. For if Faith be an unreasonable principle of action, if it be not a sufficient ground to go upon, then it is most undoubtedly an unreasonable and unjustifiable thing, for any man to entertain the sentiments of filial affection, or fraternal love. If we disgrace our nature, when we act upon the principle of faith and yield to the evidence of testimony, then is it a disgrace to nature, for any man to honour and obey another, as his parent; we do ourselves injustice when we own ourselves to be their children who call us such, and we are guilty, if not of a crime, yet at least of an absurdity, when we cultivate a peculiar tenderness towards any who were born before us, under the idea that it is a sister or a brother for whom we cultivate this respect, and to whom, on account of this connexion, it is due from us.

Sense and experience is confined within very narrow limits. The objects to which our knowledge can extend are very few; when the sphere of our affection and activity go beyond these, it is Faith, not knowledge, that carries out our views, our passions, and pursuits; it is Faith that directs, supports, and animates them. He who should resolve that his practice should go no farther than his knowledge, that he would believe nothing; that he would suffer no desires to rise in his heart, and no actions to proceed from him, but upon the conviction of his own experience, would in effect resolve

to lead a life so extremely ridiculous and uncomfortable, that it ought to be reckoned among its best circumstances, that if he kept his resolution, his life would in all probability be very short.

Almost all the affairs of life are transacted upon the evidence of testimony and under the influence of Faith; and yet mankind, in all the reproaches they have thrown one upon another, never thought that upon this account they could upbraid, or be upbraided. Even the most licentious ridiculer of this principle, never dreamed that he was chargeable with weakness and absurdity for the influence that he allowed it to have over him, and would have joined as heartily in exposing him who totally disowned it in the affairs of this world, as him who abounded in it, in respect to the concerns of another.

It is in matters of religion only that Faith is so weak, ridiculous, and absurd; for there, instead of gratifying our irregular inclinations, it reproves them; it calls away the attention of mankind from this present world; it would moderate their attachment to it, and their expectation from it, and would engage them in the pursuit of the invisible and future things of another world; things in themselves indeed more important, but not so well suited to the taste of the ambitious, the sensual, or the carnal mind. But does the dislike of them destroy their reality? Does it annihilate the evidence of these things? Is it the less certain that they are, or that they will be, because the men of this world are less willing to believe them? Does the reasonableness of Faith diminish, as the importance of its objects rises? Is it reasonable to act upon it in respect of this present life, and not in respect of

that which is to come? Is it right that we should be guided and governed by it in regard to the transitory trifles of this present state, and right also that we should disclaim and resist it, in regard to the infinitely more important interests of that which is unchangeable and everlasting?

If there be a world invisible; if there be a future state into which we are, ere long, to be removed,—if the powers of that world invisible be favourably or unfavourably disposed towards us according to our conduct in the present,—and moreover, if our condition in that future state, will depend upon the preparation we make for it in this, what is the evidence that should determine us to regard these things? The evidence of *sense* is excluded by the very nature of the objects; if this were to be obtained, they could not then be invisible and future; the evidence of testimony is all the evidence we can obtain of such objects, and having this, is it right to treat them as chimeras? to forget, to overlook, or to despise them, as the unsubstantial fictions of a wild imagination?—We could only treat them thus, if we were *conscious* that they were the dreams of our own fancy, and that we had no evidence *at all* concerning them. If it be unjustifiable to give no attention to those things, which if they have a being, are most deeply interesting to us, and of the existence of which we have all the evidence that the nature of them will admit, then, our faith in these things can be no matter of reproach to us; it is a just and reasonable principle.—Will it bear a doubt who acts the wiser part, he, who resisting the evidence of an invisible and future world divests himself of all concern about it, or he, who yielding to the evidence of its reality, attends to it, expects it, and forms his life upon the expectation.

Can it be reasonable to distrust that principle in regard to the invisible and future things of the eternal world, which we rely upon, which we act upon, in regard to the invisible and future things of the present? What is there that should make a difference? If the testimony in the one case be as credible as the testimony in the other, the Faith is in both circumstances alike reasonable, and he who yields it in the one, and withholds it in the other, who, either in word or deed, in the one case countenances and approves, and in the other, vilifies and depreciates it, has no cause to value himself upon the reasonableness of his character, his own mouth accuseth him, and by his own conduct he is condemned.

Whatever evidence, either in kind or in degree, determines us to regard what is not yet sensible and present in this earthly scene, and to make them in any respect the objects of our attention and pursuit, ought in all reason to determine us to pay a like regard to such objects as belong to any other scene of being, and to give them a just proportion of our care and labour, according to their worth.

We may even venture to say more; the conduct of mankind with respect to the futurities of this life, justifies it. It is not only reasonable that we should embrace the futurities of another world upon the same kind and the same degree of evidence on which we embrace the futurities of this; it is reasonable that we should embrace them even upon *less* evidence, and that our affections and regard to them should be more lively, and our conduct in respect of them more vigorous and resolute, even though

we have less reason in this instance to be satisfied with the testimony we have received concerning them, and more cause to apprehend that we may possibly be mistaken or deceived. A very light probability is sufficient to keep us upon our guard against a dreadful evil. It is expected, and reasonably expected, that it should do so. And on the other hand, it is universally acknowledged, that for a vast advantage, our cares and labours should be hazarded on a small assurance. The most circum-spect and severest reason will readily allow, that if there be indeed *any* evidence of a future everlasting world, which shall succeed the present short and transitory scene, where all shall receive according to their works, whatever were the means and conditions of avoiding the evils and obtaining the blessings of such a state, the infinite importance of the object, would in fact, to a mind well constituted and undepraved, and upon every mind ought in all reason to make up what might be wanting in the evidence to complete the certainty of the evidence of such a state, and to give it all its influence upon our hearts and conduct. This effect it ought to produce, whatever might be the terms of inheriting this expected happiness; but if these terms are nothing more than a strict avoidance of those evils which prudence would forbid even in consideration of the present world, what shall we say of the wisdom of those who affect to despise, or neglect to attend to them?

These considerations perhaps are more than sufficient to illustrate, as well as to evince the proposition laid down, that Faith is a reasonable principle. To these I would subjoin the following remarks, which are clearly deducible from the subject.

1. Since Faith is a reasonable principle, we have no cause to be ashamed of it. Does any man make it the subject of ridicule? There will be no difficulty in convincing others at least, if not himself, that he is more ridiculous than the Christian believer; for while he fancies that he walks by sight, he is really governed by a Faith that argues much greater credulity.

2. If Faith in general be a reasonable principle, how much more reasonable is the Christian's faith? He derives his belief of invisible and future things from authority the most unquestionable; warranted, not only by all the evidence that supports the faith of other men, but moreover by the evidence of prophecy and miracle. His faith requires of him no more than theirs, no more than reason acquiesces in, and it produces much better authority for the demands it makes.

3. It may not be improper to observe, that however natural and just the distinction between faith and reason, yet it ought not to be made without some caution and restriction. A great part of what we ordinarily call reason, is indeed faith; and faith is itself an act of reason. To *believe* upon sufficient testimony, is one among many other characteristics of reason and intelligence.

4. If Faith be a reasonable principle, we should take care that we call nothing unreasonable by that name, lest we bring a reproach upon a principle that is so natural, and so useful, and so important to the happiness of man. Whatever has not evidence to justify it, is prejudice, is presumption, it may be called by any name of folly, it is not Faith. Let us sift our opinions concerning things invisible, whether past, present, or future, and let us at least

so far separate the chaff from the wheat, as to give the name of Faith, to nothing that has not the support of argument.

5. If Faith be a reasonable principle, we need not be suspicious of any means that are proposed to confirm us in it: can we be too well established in what is just and right? And lastly,

6. If Faith be a reasonable principle, we need not be afraid of pursuing it through all its consequences. Nothing but what is right can come of what is reasonable; it must be diverted from its natural course, or corrupted by some foreign intermixture, before it can dictate or induce to what is wrong. If our Faith be the pure result of evidence, it will give us comfort, and do us honour, to show it in our works.

PRAYER.

HOLY, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come. Glory and honour and thanks be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and who liveth for ever and ever! Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and of thy good pleasure they are and were created. The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even the Maker's eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse, who having such discoveries of God, and such evidences that he is the former of their bodies, and the father of their spirits, and the author of their enjoyments, glorify him not as God, and are not thankful. May our faith be that holy

active principle that purifies the heart, that works by love, and overcomes the present world. May the word of Christ dwell richly in us with all wisdom; may we be led to a more perfect acquaintance with the truth as it is in Jesus, and by that truth may we be sanctified. As we draw nearer unto heaven, may we become more heavenly-minded, more assimilated to those pure and holy spirits that reside there, and more meet to partake with them in their employments and their happiness. While we are in the world in well doing, and in the exercise of a firm and lively faith, we would humbly commend the keeping of our souls and the disposal of all our affairs unto thee.

May we not be governed by things seen and temporal, but by a just regard to those that are unseen and everlasting; and may that Faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, preserve us that we yield not to the temptations to which we are exposed, and animate us so resolutely to resist the world, when the things of the world would either deter or allure us from our duty, that finally we may come off more than conquerors through him who loved us.

DISCOURSE III.

FAITH A DESIRABLE AND IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE.

HEBREWS xi. 1.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.

FAITH is that principle through which we apprehend the existence of invisible things, whether past, present, or future, or which stands instead of the perception of such things, as in our present circumstances, or with our present powers, cannot be perceived. It is therefore a most desirable and important principle, because it is suited to the wants and imperfections of the human mind.

If the human mind were not so constituted, as to rely upon testimony when it is not attended with suspicious circumstances, that is, to be capable of Faith, the experience of former ages would have been of small advantage to their successors. In many instances we should have been deprived of those improvements which we now assume as the foundation of our own; and the generations of mankind, which are now from age to age extending their improvements, would, like the successive generations of the inferiour creatures, have borne a great resemblance to each other. Each generation would have had just such a portion of

knowledge respecting the world in which they lived, of the nature they possess, and of the laws by which both were respectively governed, as might result from their own observation, and very little more. Besides, the curiosity of the human mind concerning things to come, is so great and powerful, that it has in all ages and in all countries engaged the weak and credulous, and sometimes, even those who were in reputation for wisdom and honour, in the most absurd practices, in order to arrive at some knowledge of them. Is it not then desirable, is it not important to the peace and comfort of mankind, that all vain imaginations, and groundless conjectures, and perplexing doubts concerning future things should be banished from their mind, by receiving and entertaining the just impressions to be derived from credible information concerning such of them as it is most important for us to be acquainted with? accompanied with an assurance, upon the same authority, that no other futurities can by any means whatever be discovered by us?

It is nothing improbable that there may be a vast variety of events to come, in which we have the greatest interest; and the very possibility that it may be so, renders it a desirable circumstance that we should be well instructed and rationally persuaded concerning what we are to expect. We are to die, and rise again, and be judged. The certainty of these events depends not at all upon our persuasion concerning them: though we had wrought ourselves into the most confident assurance that these things should never come to pass, the decree of the Almighty would not thereby be altered. No man can doubt that, being mortal, it is important for him to believe that he shall die: can it then be less impor-

tant, is it less momentous, that the moral subjects of God's kingdom should believe that they are accountable to him for all their conduct? Is it desirable that the faithful Christian should have no knowledge of the glories and felicities to which he is hereafter to be promoted? That he should carefully defend himself against all hope from a world to come, and should treat the most credible testimony concerning it as the dreams and fictions of a seducing imagination? Is it desirable that the sinner should have no suspicion of the dreadful sentence that is to be pronounced upon him; that he should carelessly overlook, or industriously shun, or obstinately resist, whatever might lead him to such an expectation? that he should treat it as a vain alarm, the suggestion of groundless terrour, the creature of a timid and disordered fancy? If this is not desirable, then is Faith a most salutary and important principle. Again,

Faith is a desirable and important principle, as it introduces us to a fund of the most delightful entertainment.

Every thing is desirable that is a source of true pleasure; every thing is important that contributes to the best enjoyment even of this present life.—When we best enjoy the circumstances in which God hath placed us, our views of life are most comfortable to ourselves, and most honourable to its Author; our sense of obligation to him is more lively, and our obedience to his laws more cheerful. Then too, when we best enjoy our own circumstances, we shall be best enjoyed by those about us; and our services will be most freely and most effectually extended towards them also. It is not therefore unimportant to consult, in any instance, the

comfort of our present being; it is desirable, not only for itself, but also for its effects and consequences: if therefore Faith had nothing else to recommend it, but, that being in itself reasonable, it administers to our entertainment and delight, it must be owned to be a desirable and important principle.

Setting aside every other consideration but that of pleasure, of agreeable and comfortable contemplation to employ the leisure and to soothe the cares of life, would it be desirable to change conditions, if we could do it, with him who knows nothing of an unseen world, nothing of the great scheme of Providence, nothing of the primeval history, and nothing of the future fates of men? Would we wish that our pleasures should, like his, be contracted within what eye can see, ear can hear, and hand can reach?—Would we choose that all the sweet, the awful, the magnificent, and interesting scenes that Faith reveals to us, should for ever be blotted out from the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts? Were it desirable that our souls should never more be suspended in astonishment, or elevated into joy, or melted into tenderness by the great and important objects that Faith presents to our view? Whose is, or rather perhaps the question ought to be, whose *might* be, the happier life; ours, to whom these things are discovered by the light of Faith, if knowing them we attend to them and feel their due influence, or his, to whom nothing is revealed but the immediate objects of his sense,—from whom all the future scenes of the divine government, and every object of the world invisible, are concealed in clouds and darkness?

Is it pleasant to have the mind extended to the utmost stretch of its capacities, raised into important expectation, or suspended in astonishment and reverence? It is: and what is there more capable of exciting these sentiments of wonder and delight than the contemplation of an universe rising into being at the word of God, taking all its infinite vicissitudes and changes from his command; by him conducted through innumerable revolutions, during an immense series of countless ages and generations? What is there more capable of exciting these pleasing sentiments, than to compare together the primeval state, the present condition, and the possible catastrophe of this world? to contemplate that important day when God spake and it was done, through all its various consequences, to that solemn moment when he shall speak again, and the heavens shall melt away, and the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up, and new heavens and a new earth shall arise from that prolifick flame?

Is there no more entertainment to an intelligent spectator, no more consolation to a heart of sensibility in beholding the universe as an eternal monument of the greatness and the goodness of its Maker, than in contemplating it merely as a great and vast object, ignorant of its origin and dependence? than in wandering in the doubtful maze of a vain imagination, fluctuating from uncertainty to uncertainty concerning it? Is it more comfortable, is it more delightful, to look upon the universe as a vessel without a governour, driven we know not whither, by we know not what, subject in all its parts to perpetual accidents and unexpected revolutions, which its wisest and most powerful inhabitants can neither control nor regulate; than to consider it as being under the direction of an able and skilful

pilot, whose counsels, though we cannot in every instance fathom them, are nevertheless, in every instance, wise and kind?—of a governour, who guides and governs all events, and causes all the various vicissitudes and revolutions we behold, to work together for the highest and most lasting good? Which is the most comfortable thought, whether we regard ourselves or others? which is the most delightful and elevating contemplation?

In the past transactions of divine providence, how interesting and delightful is it to contemplate the illustration of this great and momentous truth, the universal providence and government of God, whether as it respects families, individuals, or nations? Shall I adduce as an example, that cruel combination, when the sons of Jacob saw, but did not feel, the anguish of a brother's soul, and heard, but repented not, when a brother sued to them for mercy? Need I tell you what the father felt, and thought, and said, or describe to you the sentiments with which the son looked back unto his father's house, and forward to a long captivity? Do you need to have the sequel of this story told you? That unrighteous imprisonment, that unexpected exaltation, that tender interview, that astonishing discovery, or those pleasing, approvable and salutary emotions they excited? Do you require to be informed, that the hand of God was in all this? Or, while you see his secret providence overruling the jealousies and vices, as well as the sufferings of some, in such manner as to issue in the benefit of all; accomplishing their settlement in that very country, where, in consequence of the progress that art and knowledge had previously made there, they might be instructed and improved; a country of general resort; and

on that account, as well as on many others, the most proper theatre for the display of that mighty hand, and outstretched arm, by which the sovereignty of the God of Israel should be demonstrated ; while you see the secret providence of God in that very event, of which Jacob said, that it would bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, providing at once for the preservation of that family, for the peace and policy of a great empire, for the most publick and effectual rebuke of idolatry and superstition, and for the most proper circumstances of erecting Israel into a peculiar people, who should preserve and spread the knowledge of the true God ; while you see the hand of God in this event, at the time when it came to pass, apparently an accidental thing, a mere domestick occurrence, pursuing such various ends, promoting such important purposes, and bestowing such great and extensive benefits, does it give no pleasure to your hearts ? Does it awaken there no pious admiration, no sweet composure in the character, no sacred triumph in the government of God ?—so excellent in counsel, so wonderful in working ; in all his ways as gracious as he is great, abundant in mercy, and glorious in holiness, even when clouds and darkness intercept from us the irradiations of that glory !—Does it excite in you no sentiments of joyful sympathy and congratulation towards the subjects of so wise, and powerful, and beneficent a King ? Does it not encourage you to trust in God ? Does it create in you nothing of that delightful tranquillity, that results from the conviction, that you and your affairs are in his hands, and from the devout resignation of all your interests to him ?

In all these transactions how different were the views of Jacob and his children from the views of

God? Their judgments and sentiments respecting them, were formed only by the things that were seen and present with them: how different an aspect do they now assume to us, who see their importance as a part of the great plan of providence; whose views, in reflecting on them, approach so much nearer to the views of divine providence in conducting these events, and who see so much more, than they could discover, of the great ends and objects which they were intended and calculated to produce?—How pleasant is it, by the light of Faith, to compare these different views together, to pursue the contemplations which that comparison suggests, and to cultivate and indulge the affections they call forth?

When we carry forward our thoughts unto futurity, we are compelled to believe, that there is a day, not very distant, which shall be marked by our funerals, when our bodies shall be sealed up in the grave. Should we anticipate that day with greater pleasure, if we believed that the pains and weaknesses which usually lead thither, would be our last sensations? If we believed, that when once the dust to which we were going had received us, we should know and be known no more for ever? Could we think with greater pleasure of retiring out of this world, if we were ignorant, if we were dubious, whether there were any other scene of being to succeed it? Would the vale of death exhibit to us a more pleasing prospect, if it did not open into another and a more important world? Could we go with greater satisfaction to lay our pious parents, our worthy friends, or our virtuous children in the grave, if we thought that we had then bid adieu to them for ever? Could we stand with so much serenity by the death-bed of the just, if we dared not to

encourage our imaginations in following them into nobler life, and to a better world, where ten thousand times ten thousand happy spirits are rejoicing in the friendship of their Maker, and whose number it may be is every moment receiving new accessions? if we knew nothing of the new Jerusalem, of God, of Christ, and the innumerable company of angels, to which all just men, when they have left this fleshly tabernacle, shall be for ever united?

No, my friends :—it is Faith to which we owe the most cordial consolations, under the heaviest pressures of mortality : it is Faith to which we are indebted for our sublimest pleasures ; for it is Faith that discovers to us our virtuous predecessors exalted into all the happiness we could desire for them. It is Faith that teaches us to look upon this life, noble as is the rank we hold in the present world, and great as are the blessings we enjoy in it, as nothing more than the seed-time of human being, the school of our education, the childhood of our existence ; and it is Faith that enables us to antedate the happiness of that better state, where our labours shall be recompensed by the noblest harvest, and our nature shall arrive at its full maturity and perfection.

Are these the pleasures and the consolations that arise from Faith? Is it not then a most desirable and important principle? Regarding only the comforts and enjoyments of this present state, what other source of consolation or of pleasure can you find that deserves to be brought into comparison with it?—The eternity to come! what an interesting discovery! how sweet! how consolatory! how full of heartfelt satisfaction!—To find ourselves with all the virtuous friends we have ever loved on

earth, with all the faithful servants of God who have gone before us, redeemed from the power of sin and death, refined from every imperfection, exalted above every evil, and for ever settled in the presence of God! how transporting the expectation!

Take care, Christian, that thy faith be something more than a principle of pleasure; let it so influence the whole of thy conduct, that finally thou mayest obtain an abundant entrance into that better world, where, though Love shall for ever live, yet Faith and Hope, having answered the important purposes for which they were given, shall give place to certainty and happiness.

PRAYER.

WORTHY art thou, O Lord God Almighty, to receive the profoundest adorations, and the most perfect services of all thine intelligent creation!—From thy good pleasure all things derive their being; by thy wisdom they were originally disposed in that harmonious order in which we now behold them; and it is by thy decree that they retain it. Thy providence it is that ordereth all events, and we have the most comfortable assurance, that all things shall work together for good to those who love thee and obey thee.

We bless thy name, that by endowing us with the principles of reason and of faith, thou hast made us capable of knowing whence all our comforts flow. We adore thee as the fountain of life and blessedness, we thank thee for all the happiness we see around us, and for the large share that we ourselves

have had in the general felicity. But above all we praise and magnify thy name for the glorious prospects and transporting expectations which Faith opens to our view. As children of the light and of the day, may our conversation be in Heaven; may our character and conduct be always such as becomes the citizens of the New Jerusalem, and members of that glorious community that is composed of the innumerable company of Angels, and all the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and God the Judge of all! As we wish, when the days of the years of our pilgrimage are over, to be received to dwell with them where they are, may we steadily adhere to those principles of piety, and purity, and charity, which constitute their happiness and glory; and may the hope of this blessed union, support, and comfort, and rejoice our spirits under all the labours and trials of this present state.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE UNREASONABLENESS AND FOLLY OF UNDUE ANXIETY.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 6.

Be careful for nothing.—

WE are made with a capacity of extending our thoughts into futurity. Almost all our occupations have some respect to what is yet to come, and every hour has some influence upon all the hours that come after it. We know this by experience; and such is our propensity to look beyond the present, that it is impossible we should not frequently be figuring to ourselves, what it may be leading on. Hence, as, on the one hand, we are apt to flatter ourselves with vain and groundless hopes, which in the end must frequently betray us into the bitterest disappointments; so on the other hand, in other circumstances, we are apt to afflict ourselves with cares and anxieties no less vain and groundless, by the anticipation of distresses, with which the providence of God perhaps did not mean to exercise us; or, if he did, never meant that they should torment us before their time. It is against such anxieties and cares, that the apostle would guard us in the text; not against the exercise, but against the abuse and misapplication of that capacity which God has implanted in us, of apprehending the future consequences of present things; against the abuse of

that propensity to which he has determined us, to descry them, if it can be, from afar.

That we should be able to apprehend what will be the consequences of our conduct, and that we should pay a serious regard to them, is necessary to the faithful discharge of our duty: if we neglect to consider these things, we shall be betrayed into perpetual offences against virtue, as well as against prudence; against God, and against our own souls. Hope and fear are both of them natural passions, implanted in our frame by that Almighty hand by which we are so fearfully and wonderfully made; they cannot, and if they could, they ought not, to be rooted out. But the objects of hope and fear are future things; each of them a species of care about futurities; and while these cares are restrained within proper bounds, we are neither required nor permitted to cast them off. These passions were designed, the one to beguile our labours, to animate our perseverance, and to sweeten the work of life; the other, to put us upon our guard against approaching evils, to lead us to such measures, as, according to the views of human prudence, in humble dependence upon the blessing and the providence of God, may be most effectual for our preservation or deliverance. While our cares about futurity are directed solely to this end, far from being guilty, they are innocent; they are more than innocent, they are virtuous. Such cares about futurity, religion means not to censure or discourage: she approves of, she commends all attentions to the futurities of life that may have any influence to promote our future virtue, or our future comfort,—if they interfere not with the grateful sense, and the just acknowledgment of the mercies that attend us in the present hour, and withdraw us

not from the duties which in that season are incumbent on us,—nor disqualify us for the proper improvement of the talents which at that time are passing through our hands. They are the cares that stretch themselves out into futurity, to fetch multiplied and imaginary evils thence to increase and aggravate the distresses that are present; the cares that antedate approaching evils, and add them to the sorrows of the passing day; the cares that, in anticipating afflictions which probably are at hand, overlook the mercies with which a gracious providence will intermingle them; the cares that look upon afflictions only on the gloomy side; which love to sit brooding over a melancholy and distressing scene; which forget, that the counsels of God, though unsearchable, are not unkind; and that though clouds and darkness are round about him, judgment and mercy are the supporters of his throne:—Cares, that tend to hard thoughts of God and Providence, that cool our admiration of the divine perfections, and damp our love of God; cares, that tempt us, if we durst, to wish that our affairs were in our own disposal, and that would urge us, if we could, to reverse the decrees of Heaven; cares, that generate impatience and ingratitude, that induce a gloomy and complaining spirit; that render us inattentive to our obligations, or disqualify us to discharge them in the most acceptable manner:—Cares, which are inconsistent with a lively faith in the providence of God, or a sincere concern to recommend ourselves to his blessing, which are as anxious, as if he cared not for us, as irreligious and indevout, as if all our interests depended on ourselves; cares about this mortal body and this present world, which exclude the more important cares that relate to the prosperity of the soul and the interests of eternity. These are the cares

that religion frowns upon, that the Apostle has forbidden, and which our own consciences, the moment we reflect upon them, must condemn. "Be careful for nothing," says the Apostle, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

It is obvious, on the most inattentive consideration, that the cares which are here forbidden, are such as do *not* vent themselves in acts of prayer and supplication; such as do *not* lead us unto God with a becoming sense of our dependence on him, and with humble hope in his mercy. They are such cares as throw the mind into tumultuous agitation, and impatient restlessness: for immediately after our text, the Apostle adds, "take the advice I here offer you," and "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." Such cares, it is evident, ought by all means to be discouraged and repressed; and if we have any regard either to our duty or our interest, we shall keep our hearts with all diligence, that they obtain no admission there: For,

In the first place, they can do no good; the course of providence will proceed, be we willing or unwilling; acquiescent or reluctant, we must bear the will of God. Afraid, or not afraid, the evils that are appointed us, will come upon us: solicitous, or not solicitous to escape it, whatever gall the hand of God has mingled in our cup, must be drunk by us, even to the last drop. Do you see any pressing evil drawing near you? apply all the means that prudence recommends, and duty will permit, to repel, or to escape it; apply them in

dependence upon God's pleasure and concurrence, from whom all means and instruments derive their power, efficacy, and success; and who will not fail to grant you the deliverance which thus you seek, if that deliverance be good for you. And when you have done this, what more is there that you would do? what more is there that you can do? All your anxieties and cares cannot change the councils of God; all your reluctance and opposition can make no alteration in his purposes; and if they could be changed, it is not your disobedience that is likely to make any change in them for the better.

In the second place, the cares of which we speak, as they can do no good, so they must do much harm. They will hurt ourselves. By this means we run to meet the afflictions that await us, and so are in distress longer than God meant we should be. By this means we create to ourselves troubles which Divine Providence had not appointed for us, and are miserable in the anticipation of things that shall never be. By this means we injure the health of our bodies, and impair the fortitude of our minds; we prepare ourselves to be utterly overwhelmed by the calamities which we cannot avoid; we incapacitate ourselves for the duties of those circumstances into which God is leading us, and the just improvement of the talents he is about to put into our hands; and at the same time, set ourselves out of the reach of those comforts with which he meant to cheer and uphold us, when the visitations that we dread shall come.—But this is not all. It is the testimony of universal experience, in respect to all calamities in general, that they are ordinarily more terrible in prospect than in presence; more insupportable in the apprehen-

sions of imagination, than we find them when in reality we feel their pressure; by our cares and anxieties therefore about ills to come, we suffer, not only longer continuance of affliction, but a more dreadful evil than Providence had prepared for us.

Christian, what aileth thee? Adversity has made a visit to thy tabernacle; affliction has cast her clouds upon thy dwelling; and sitting there, thou art often ruminating what will be the end of these things. Christian, take care that no undutiful anxieties arise; that nothing inconsistent with thy faith and hope find admission into thy heart. Is not the evil of the day, sufficient to the day? Is it needful to bring other accessory evils, which might perhaps have never come? The visitations of God shall not overpower thee; take heed that thy own imprudence do not.—But thou art saying, perhaps, “How can I bear the loss of this comfort? how can I bear the destruction of that hope?” Who told thee that *that* comfort should be lost? who told thee that *that* hope should be destroyed?—Thy comforts may be threatened, and yet not cut down; thy hopes may be blighted for a season, and yet not destroyed; the delights of thine eyes may be sick, and yet that sickness may not be unto death; the desires of thine heart may all be brought to the borders of the grave, and yet all may be remanded thence. Secret things belong unto the Lord, who knoweth what mercies are in store for thee: but if it should be as thy fears suggest, yet let not thy virtue die before thy blessings. It will be some consolation in such trials if they come, that thou knowest thou hast all the security that thy sincerest consecration of them unto God, and thy steadiest resolution to improve and to form them to

his glory, can procure thee. Thou hast not made shipwreck of Faith and a good conscience; assure thyself, that according to thy afflictions shall thy consolations be; all things shall work together for good to those who love God, and as thy day is, so shall be thy strength.

But even this is not all; anxieties and cares not only antedate and aggravate affliction, they will hurt our consciences when we come to look back upon them, and in the mean time they will displease our Maker, and bring down upon us, it may be, the very evils that create our cares, from which had our hearts been more resigned, and our temper less impatient, the arm of God in due time might have delivered us. His mercies, it is probable, are dispensed according to our meetness to receive them: this indeed, in the present state of discipline, is not the only rule, but most certainly it does enter into those considerations on which the counsels of the divine mind are formed, and ought therefore to be remembered by us in all the prayers that we address unto him, and in all the expectations that we build upon his mercy.—Consider these things, Christian; in every hour of sorrow think on them, repress thy cares, and let thy soul return unto its rest.

Let us remember, moreover, that these anxieties and solitudes set a bad example. It cannot well happen but that in our afflictions, others too must be afflicted, and our dejections will deject them; our diffidence and anxiety may communicate its contagion to their hearts, and we may in some measure have their guilt to answer for, as well as our own. They will hurt our religion too; they will disgrace our Christian profession. Unbelievers may triumph in our weakness as an argument of

the impotence of our religion—what is a Christian more than other men, or what in his Faith more excellent or more useful, than our infidelity?

So vain are the cares that religion requires us to cast off, so mischievous the anxieties she condemns; they take away from us our comforts while yet we might enjoy them; they hurry us into distresses while yet we might decline them; they protract the continuance of our afflictions; they multiply the number of our sorrows, and they aggravate the degree of our sufferings; they make the present wretched for no other reason, but because it is possible the future may be so; they hurt both our bodies and our souls; they injure our friends as well as ourselves; they disqualify us to receive the comforts which Providence ever intermingles with its most afflictive dispensations; and incapacitate us to discharge the duties, not only of the circumstances in which we at present are, but of those which will be required of us when they arrive. Interfering with the discharge of duty, they are themselves undutiful and irreligious; they add sin to sorrow.

But let not the faithful Christian infer from hence, that all painful forethoughts are criminal anxieties; God distinguishes between infirmities and sins: let the Christian learn for his own comfort to distinguish between them too. If he knows, that he would not, if he could, reverse one decree of God, however painful and distressing to him; if he knows, that he would not, if he could, accomplish his most darling hope at the expense of the divine approbation; if he knows, that he would not, if he could, save his most precious blessing by forfeiting his Maker's friendship; let him be assured that God

remembers his frame, and expects not that he should put off his nature. God will compassionate his frailties; he will overlook the starting tear, and forgive the involuntary sigh. Let him make it his endeavour to be "careful for nothing," and God will approve and bless him. Let him in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known his requests unto God, and he may hope, that, "the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep his heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

PRAYER.

O LORD God Almighty, thou art the creator of the ends of the earth, who faintest not, neither art weary. Thou madest us, and not we ourselves, we are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture, thou formedst our bodies out of the dust of the earth, thou breathedst into them the breath of life, and thine inspiration hath given us understanding. This life we know is a changeable and imperfect scene, in which all our comforts and delights are exposed to perpetual danger. May no anxiety respecting the future interfere with our thankfulness for present blessings, or at all impede our alacrity, diligence, and zeal in thy service. May our hearts be fixed, trusting in thee, who will not suffer us to want the strength that is needful to our day. Encouraged by all that we see around us of thine infinite goodness,—by our own experience of thy past care and kindness, we would in well doing commit all our future interests unto thee; we would dismiss all anxiety and care, and would cast our burdens on the Lord, resigned unto his will, and rejoicing in his fatherly protection.

In whatever state we are, may we therewith be content: May it be our only solicitude, to discharge, in the most acceptable manner, all the duties of every circumstance into which thy providence may lead us; and though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine, though the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall; though this world's comforts should entirely fail, supported by the testimony of our conscience, and the exceeding great and precious promises of God, may we still rejoice in the Lord for ever, and joy in the God of our salvation!

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE DUTY OF JOINING THANKSGIVING WITH PRAYER IN TIME OF AFFLICTION.

PART I.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 6.

In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving,
make known your requests unto God.

PRAYER is the natural language of fear and trouble; while they know no change, it often happens, that men fear not God—afflictions send them to him. When dangers and distresses have convinced them of their own weakness, and of the vanity of all human aid, then they cry unto the Lord to give them help from trouble; they are no longer able to resist the conviction of their absolute dependence upon him; no longer willing to dispute the propriety of addressing themselves to him; no longer capable of stifling the propensities of nature, or of restraining the homage that they owe to the great Maker and Ruler of the world. In times of trouble, then, prayer to God is as natural as it is right: But who can sing the songs of praise under the clouds of sorrow, and amidst the waters of affliction? What connexion is there between thanksgiving and distress? What could move the

apostle to inculcate this duty upon those that are in trouble? When we are delivered *out* of trouble, thanksgiving is undoubtedly of especial obligation; and prayer and supplication, while our troubles last; but why is it required of us to mingle thanksgiving with our prayers in the day of our affliction? A multitude of reasons will suggest themselves to any one who will seriously consider the question; give me leave, briefly, to mention a few.

1. We may observe, in general, that afflictions are not evils. Let me not be mistaken; I mean not to deny that nature shrinks from them; I mean not to insinuate, that we can by any means render ourselves insensible to pain and sorrow; I speak not of the present pressure of affliction, but with respect to the future consequences of present suffering; with respect to the moral influences of adversity, with respect to the fair and the abundant fruits of holiness and happiness which by faith, and patience, and diligence, it may be made to yield. I speak with regard to the *whole*, both of our condition and our existence; and when it is asserted that afflictions are not evils, it is meant, that without them we should have less comfort in this present scene of things; or, fewer advantages in our power with respect to that eternal state which is soon to succeed it: they do, or at least, if it is not our own fault, they may, advance our interests upon the whole, and therefore are not upon the whole, evils. There is no evil being that has any thing to do in the government of the world; it is ruled by the God of love. Our sharpest pains, our severest anguish, are not the cruelties of a malignant principle, they are not the barbarous sport of an insensible and wanton mind. They are not blown to us by

the wind of chance, nor borne down upon us by the torrent of an unintelligent and irresistible destiny: they are the gracious visitations of our heavenly Father, without whom, not a sparrow falleth to the ground, nor a hair from the human head. We call them evils, and yet they come from the pure and incorruptible fountain of all good; and it is with the kindest intention that they are sent to us. Did we see with the eyes of God, we should call them all blessings; for they are all alike capable of being converted by us to our interest, and all alike intended to do us good. If any confidence can be placed in the clearest deductions of reason, this is an indubitable consequence of the absolute independence and infinite perfection of God. The word of God is as clear and full as we could wish it, on a point of such mighty moment to our tranquillity and comfort. How often are we told there, that nothing happens to us but by his appointment—that there is no evil—nothing that we blindly call so, but of his creating; that he has no pleasure, either in the destruction, or the distresses of his creatures; that he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men; that he chastens them, not for his own pleasure, but for their profit, that they may be made partakers of his holiness? How often are we taught that the sufferings of life are not the tokens of divine wrath, but the testimonies of God's paternal attention and compassion? That the trials of adversity, the various calamities with which we are visited, are calculated to promote our virtue, to improve our comfort, to secure our best interest, and to enlarge our heavenly inheritance.—The light affliction of this transitory world, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

If such then be the nature of afflictions; if such be the principle from which they come; if such be their genuine tendency, and such the advantages they put into our hands, have we no reason to give thanks for them? Difficult it may be, but unreasonable it is not.

No man can be at a loss to say, which hath the greater obligation to his father, the child that is suffered, without discipline or culture, to grow up in ignorance and folly, the slave of humour, appetite, and passion; or, the child whose prejudices are carefully corrected, whose follies are properly rebuked, whose faults are mercifully and calmly, yet steadily and uniformly chastised, and who is instructed, or assisted to instruct himself, in whatever is of most importance to the interests of his future life; and it is not to be doubted, that when they have each attained to maturity of judgment, and acquired experience in human things, the one will lament the blind indulgence that permitted him without interruption to enjoy himself according to his own will, and the other will rejoice in the hardships to which he was inured, and will estimate even the severities that excited no gratitude at the time, among the truest arguments of parental tenderness and love.—This whole life, in respect to the whole of our existence, is a scene of discipline and education; have we not reason to rejoice in the superintendence of our heavenly Father? If we were left without the instructions and admonitions, without the correctives and corroborations of adversity, then would he not deal with us as sons.

But, to put the discipline of this life as it affects the interests of the next, out of the account; to consider only the enjoyment of our present be-

ing ; it might bear a doubt, whether such sufferings as ordinarily fall to the lot of men, together with the supports, the consolations, the deliverances that are ordinarily granted them, do not make, or put it in our power to make, even this present state a more desirable and more comfortable scene, than if every species of adversity were absolutely excluded from it. There is a joy in deliverance, that exists not in uninterrupted security : there is a delight in the *restoration* of a comfort, which for a time has been either totally or in part suspended, that is not to be found in the continued possession of it. There are a multitude of soothing satisfactions that are peculiar to the hour of trouble. While we reflect on the blessings that remain, they are the more endeared to us ; when we experience the efficacy of those supports with which God has furnished us, how sweet are our reflections on the tenderness of our heavenly Father, who never leaves us, nor forsakes us ; who forgetteth not how frail we are ; and who, in the midst of judgment, remembers mercy !

What joy is it to the Christian, (and all men may attain the Christian temper) what joy is it to reflect that his trials have not overcome his faith, nor extinguished his devotion, nor diminished his alacrity in the service of his Maker ? What joy is it that he bears, or strives to bear, his burdens, with a decent composure, and that he improves, or labours to improve them with all fidelity and diligence ? Into what tenderness does not sorrow melt the heart of friendship ? What unusual and delightful acceptableness does it not impart to all its services ? What stability and firmness does it not for ever add unto the union ?

These things, if we attend to them, may suffice to satisfy us, that with respect even to the enjoy-

ment of the present life, it is no undesirable thing that we should sometimes receive the visits of adversity. It is not the child that is indulged in all his wishes, that best enjoys even the season of his tutelage and childhood; neither is it the man who never knows the discipline of adversity, that best enjoys this scene of human education. The salutary severities that occasionally restrain the perverseness of the child, or that correct the prejudices, compose the dissipation and improve the sensibility of the man, contribute each in its place to enlarge their capacity of happiness.—What impropriety then is there in the Apostle's counsel? To our prayers to God in the day of trouble and danger, why should we not add our thanksgivings?

I will not ask the *sinner* if he has no cause to be thankful for the afflictions that recall him from his wanderings, and cure him of his levity, and bring him back to God.* Let me ask the Christian, who may perhaps think that he stands less in need of such distasteful dispensations, if there be no cause for thankfulness in circumstances, that may enliven his conviction of his own weakness and insufficiency, and of his absolute dependence upon God? In circumstances that most feelingly demonstrate to him the importance of the divine favour, and the vanity

* The following lines were written by the late eminently pious Dr. Doddridge, on the tombstone of a young man, who died in consequence of a broken leg, and whose life, previous to that accident, had been very intemperate. They are inserted by the Editor, not for the beauty of the poetry, but as the record of an interesting fact, and for the justness of the sentiment.

In life's gay prime a thousand joys I sought,
But heaven and an immortal soul forgot;
In riper years, Affliction's smarting rod,
And pains and wounds, taught me to know my God;
I bless'd the change with my expiring breath,
And life ascrib'd to *that* which wrought my death.

of all human things? In circumstances that most powerfully incline him to serious thought and sincere devotion; that melt his heart into all the sweet and amiable sympathies of Christian charity and love; that clothe him more gracefully than ever, in humility; that engage him in the most accurate examination of his heart and conduct, and that quicken the sentiments of penitence, and strengthen his resolutions of obedience?—In such circumstances, Christian, is there nothing for which thou shouldst give thanks?—These advantages, affliction offers thee; these uses thou mayest make of it; whilst thou prayest to God, then, that he would give thee grace so to improve them, shouldst thou not give thanks, that thou hast them in thy hands so to be improved?

2. In our afflictions it becomes us to unite thanksgivings with our prayers, for another reason also, viz. that our sufferings are not so great as our demerit.—Sinner, perhaps thou art afflicted; trouble after trouble hath laid hold upon thee; deep and various are thy distresses, and thou art ready to cry out, “come and see, was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?” From my heart I pity thee, and I pray God that in the end it may prove good for thee that thou art so afflicted. I am ready to admit all that thou canst think of the weight of what God hath laid upon thee. Yet consider for a moment, and thou must admit, that notwithstanding all, thou hast reason to rejoice and to give thanks.—Thou art a *living* man, and for the living there is hope: the day of grace is not over, the gates of mercy are not shut—thy eternal interests are not yet desperate. Surely it is a privilege to be owned with the warmest gratitude, that thou art yet in a state of discipline and hope.—How dreadful had been thy situa-

tion, if justice had already summoned thee to her awful tribunal, and had pronounced the irrevocable doom?

It is no unworthy or unuseful exercise of our understanding, to contemplate the various characters and circumstances of mankind, and to consider the influence, which in fact they have, or in reason ought to have upon each other. But after all, our most urgent business is at home. Christians, what think ye of yourselves? what think ye of your own suffering? what have you thought, what should ye think, of your afflictions? You have not, I would hope, so unjust an idea of the present state, so overweening an idea of your own merit, as to conceive, that the most perfect sincerity in your obedience to the law of God, your most diligent and strenuous endeavours to fulfil all righteousness, either will, or ought to exempt you from afflictions. You pray to be delivered, but you pray more earnestly to be supported, and to be led to the just improvement of them; and with these your humble supplications, you offer up thanksgivings, not less sincere and cordial, that in the midst of judgment God remembers mercy.—What, you say, had been my condition, if it had been determined by my merit? If for every instance in which I had forgotten God, he had forgotten me and my concerns; if for every duty I had neglected, he had subtracted but one from my comforts and enjoyments;—if, for every deviation I have made from the way of his commandments, his chastisements had come upon me; my hopes had been extinguished; my comforts had been exhausted, and my miseries had been already insupportable. How precious are his thoughts unto me! how great is the sum of them! It is true, I have been happier; but while I can hope in God

that he will extend his compassion to me, and can rejoice in his benignity that he has not chastened me according to my demerit, but according to his own goodness, I am not unhappy still. Thy mercy, O my God, appears in every dispensation of thy providence. The prosperities thou bestowest on me demand my gratitude, for I am not worthy of them; I am not even worthy to be chastened with so much tenderness and pity.

Such, in regard to the dispensations of divine Providence, are the sentiments of every heart that is truly Christian.—In this manner does the Christian own his obligation in all things to give thanks.

PRAAYER.

O LORD God Almighty, thou art greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all them that come nigh unto thee, for thou seest not as man seeth, neither art thy ways like our ways. Into this world we know we are sent as into a school of discipline and education; notwithstanding therefore all the difficulties and trials we may meet with, some of which may try our faith and patience to the uttermost, may this be at all times our support and consolation, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; that he will never leave us if we forsake not him; that our strength shall be proportioned to our day; that if we love him, all things shall work together for our good according to his promise; and that if we obey him, we shall finally, and for ought we know speedily be received into that better world, the great object of our wishes and our hopes, where we shall obtain the reward of our faith and patience, in pure, unspeakable, and unchangeable felicity.

Seeing we have this transporting expectation in us, may we hold out unto the end. Enable us, O God, to occupy all our talents with fidelity and diligence; to sustain all our trials with fortitude and constancy, till we see him, whom having not seen we love, and hear that blessed sentence—well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE DUTY OF JOINING THANKSGIVING WITH PRAYER IN TIME OF AFFLICTION.

PART II.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 6.

In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make known your requests unto God.

IN the hour of trouble it becomes us to unite thanksgiving with our prayers, because, let our condition be what it may, it is not so afflictive as it might have been.

In every sorrow that you have ever yet experienced, it would be very easy for you to imagine what would have greatly aggravated and embittered it. There were still some powers of your nature, there were still some circumstances of your situation, which the arrows of adversity had not reached.—If you were poor, perhaps you were in health; if you were sick, perhaps you did not want what might procure you wherewith to mitigate and remove your sicknesses. If your bodies were diseased, your minds were not disordered, you were still possessed of your rational and moral powers; and though your bodily diseases were many, you

were not exercised with all the pains and sicknesses that might have been combined together; it is probable you might have recollected among your friends, perhaps you might have found within your neighbourhood, those that were at that very time proved with more. If your friends were in trouble, yet it was only some, not all of them; you perhaps were not afflicted, but in their affliction: if *you* were in trouble, *they* perhaps were not afflicted but in yours. You were not incapacitated for performing the offices of friendship for them, nor they withheld from rendering the like services to you.

If your troubles were of such a nature as to admit of human consolation and relief, it is probable that they befel you in a scene, and at a time, when such aids and comforts might be obtained: If, of such a nature they were not, and the whole burden must have been borne by yourself alone, it is very probable you can call to remembrance those seasons and conjunctures of your life, those states of mind, of body, or of circumstances which formerly you have experienced, in which it was possible you might have been placed again, wherein the troubles that oppressed you would have borne upon you much more heavily, and have affected you with much keener and more insupportable distress.

If your anguish has been very sharp, it has not been very tedious; if your sorrow has been of some continuance, it has not been without intervals of comfort and enjoyment, and perhaps all along it has been very tolerable. If the afflictions which you have feared have overtaken you, yet you feared them perhaps sometime before you

felt them, and when they came, though you found them very painful, yet not so distressing as you feared. They might have embittered life much sooner, they might have embittered it much more.

You are injured in your property, you feel it sensibly, those who are dependent on you feel it; but say, is there nothing still remaining to you, of which you might be unjustly deprived?—You are injured in your honour, misrepresented, calumniated, and traduced by some means or other; by unjust suspicion, by uncandid interpretation, by malignant slander, you have suffered in the esteem of men; in the friendship of those who were most tenderly affected towards you, and thus, much of the comfort of your life has been destroyed; it may be so, but would it not have been a severer trial, if you had deserved such calumnies? Would it not have pained you more to have been conscious that such detractions, though unkind, were not unjust? Have you been degraded as low as possible in the opinion of mankind? Have the enemies of your repose done you all the mischief they might have done.

By the instability of human things, by the changeableness of human disposition, or by the stroke of death perhaps, you have lost a relative or a friend; not one perhaps, but more; they are no longer to be found in this world; or, if they be, through the vicissitudes to which this world is subject, some, whom you counted among its most valuable blessings, are to you as if they were not. It may be so; but are there none that might be added to the number? It is true these are the richest treasures of this present state, but have all

your riches made themselves wings and fled away? Has there been no succession in the circle of your connexions? Is there no reason to expect there may be? Are there none remaining to you of all that have long occupied your most pleasing cares, tendered you the most substantial services, and furnished you with your most delightful entertainment? There are very few, even of those who have reached the extremest date of human life, that can make a complaint like this; very few on whose connexions time and chance have made such dreadful depredations, that they have none in whom they can trust to sweeten what remains of life, and to lay them in a descent grave; and while this is not our condition, it is not so deplorable as it might have been.

In every scene of affliction, in every hour of trouble, there is something for which we may, something for which, if we would be faithful to our duty, we must give thanks.—My friends, there is no condition of human life that we ever have experienced, or ever shall, from which some consolations, still left us, might not have been withdrawn; to which some sorrow might not have been added; in which some circumstances might not have been altered for the worse.

In the second place, it becomes us, in our afflictions, to unite thanksgiving with our supplication, because our afflictions, in this life, never are so great, but that they admit of consolation.

Diseases both of body and mind, are in very many instances capable of being cured by proper applications; and even in those instances where they prove incurable, the anguish of them, ordinarily at least, is

capable of being mitigated ; and such is the benignity of God, that both in the material and spiritual worlds he hath furnished us with a variety of remedies and lenitives for the various pains and distresses to which we are liable. It is a law of our nature that reflects the greatest honour on the Author of it, and calls upon us for perpetual gratitude, that in many cases, the longer we suffer, the lighter our sufferings become. If our pleasures please us less when they are become habitual, this is abundantly made up to us in the counterpart of the appointment—that our distresses distress us less, as we become inured to them.

Prayer is another of the comforts of which we may avail ourselves in our afflictions ; it is a comfort which God extends to us, and which he means, which he expects, which he requires us to take. To our dutiful endeavours to sustain our sorrows, we may add our pious supplications for support, and comfort, and relief ; and having done this, we cannot, in any circumstances, however distressing, be devoid of hope. Hope is the great cordial of human life. It must mingle with our most prosperous circumstances, or the enjoyment of them will be but very dull, and languid, and imperfect : Without hope, the adversities of life, even in the lightest instances, would sit heavily on our hearts ; and on the contrary, our most grievous sufferings yield in some measure to its cheering influences. In our worst condition, we are not without hope that the day is coming when it may be better with us ; our pains may cease, our fears may vanish ; our difficulties may find a period at last ; by and by our tears may be dried up, and our wounded hearts be healed.—If no other hope remain to us, yet we know that ere long we shall arrive at those peaceful mansions, where the weary

are at rest. Our troubles will at least cease there. Death will compose our fears and take away our pains. We shall groan no more in that land of silence. When that placid slumber steals upon us, every grief will be forgotten. Though no bright interval should gild the remainder of the day, when once the sun of life is set, the night we know will be still and easy; we shall rest then, if not before; and if our state be such, that we find no intermission of our anguish, that night is probably not far off.

These hopes, Christians, nothing can take from us: we have no pains that are immortal. The storms of life must drive us to the haven whither we are steering. Let us keep our good character, and we cannot miss our port. When sorrows press upon us, it is a sweet reflection, a thought that soothes the anguish of our hearts, that by and by we shall shut our eyes on all that troubles us, and lay ourselves down, to be disturbed no more.—But how much sweeter, how much more soothing is the thought, of what mighty power, Christians, have you not often found it to cheer you in a dark and painful hour, that when we are retired from this world's troubles, we shall be received to that where no tribulations come; to pure, and endless, and inconceivable felicity? This hope is indeed an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast; the consolation it contains is unspeakable. The vale of death is peaceful, the world to which it leads, is glorious and happy.—Happy man whose inheritance is there! Why will not all men be so happy? Happy he, whose hope can anticipate his arrival there! He is well prepared for all the calamities of life; he can never want a cordial to support him under them; he has reason, and will ordinarily have the disposition too,

to rejoice evermore. He cannot guard himself, and he knows that God neither should nor will defend him from the common calamities of life, but whatever may happen, nothing can come without his own consent, that shall destroy his eternal interests. These consolations, some of them we *must* have, all of them we *may* have, in every hour of trouble, and through every hour of life. Say, then, was the Apostle wrong? was he unacquainted with the condition, was he inattentive to the circumstances of mankind? is the advice impracticable, is the command unreasonable, that in our afflictions we should give thanks? Much matter for thanksgiving we can never fail to have. If then we offer not the sacrifice of gratitude together with our prayers to heaven, we withhold from God the glory due unto his name, and we may do an injury to our own souls; for I must just mention in the third place,

That by cultivating and cherishing that temper of mind, which will lead us to intermingle thanksgivings with our prayers, we shall recommend ourselves to the divine favour, in respect to the wants, and pains, and fears that are present with us.

Will God look with an equally propitious eye, on the thankful and on the unthankful? To forget the mercies that we have, is this the way to obtain the mercies that we want? Shall new mercies be bestowed upon that man, who shows in his present conduct that he will forget them as soon as new troubles shall arise? Shall new mercies be withheld, by the Father of mercies, from that man whose present conduct gives the best security, that whatever is bestowed upon him, uneffaced by time or sorrow, shall be had in everlasting remembrance? Which

manifests the best disposition to improve the blessing that he asks; on which could you rely most confidently, that he would employ your bounty in a manner honourable to himself and acceptable to you, the man who forgets what you have already done for him, or he, who, with true humility and gratitude, acknowledges your former kindnesses, whilst he is soliciting your future favours?—You cannot for a moment hesitate how the question should be answered. Hear then the Apostle's counsel, be grateful for the past, if you would be happy in the future, and mingle thanksgiving with your prayers, if ye mean that your prayers should be regarded.

In the fourth place.—Our prayers and supplications in the day of our adversity, ought to be accompanied with thanksgiving, because present troubles do not annihilate former mercies.

If you have lost a blessing, you have had one; it may be, that you have had it long: it may be, that the time you have been happy in the possession of it, is much longer than the time for which you will be afflicted by its loss. It is now taken from you, but the value of the blessing is not hereby diminished; the period during which you were indulged by it, is not hereby shortened; the enjoyment was as real as the loss.

Has sickness seized you? there is room for thankfulness that you know the difference between a state of sickness and a state of health.—Have you lost a friend? You had a friend to lose. Have you lost, unjustly lost, your esteem and credit in the world? It is true, notwithstanding, that for a time you enjoyed the good opinion of the world, and

your obligations unto God who gave you to enjoy it for that period, are in this respect unaltered and unalterable. You cannot, it is true, thank God for a blessing he has taken from you; but it is your duty, even when it is not permitted you to retain it, it is still your duty to give thanks to him that you had that blessing once, and that it was not taken from you sooner. There was a portion of your life that was happier than it would have been without it; ought you not then to bless him for the past, while you implore his pity on the present?—Does it not become you, while you beseech him to comfort you under the loss, to thank him that he blessed you with the enjoyment.—I said, but perhaps I ought not to have said, that you cannot thank God for a blessing which he has taken from you; for methinks, if reason have that authority which she ought to have over your affections, you will be able, even after you have lost the comforts in which you delighted most, in some measure to re-enjoy the pleasures that they gave you. Though the blessing be gone, your memory is not gone with it; and whilst this remains, you may avail yourself of its aid to supply the absence of the comfort you have lost, by bringing back into the present, the enjoyments of the past. To a mind that is properly affected, it gives less pain than pleasure in sickness, to recollect the season of health; in poverty, the time of our affluence; in our separation from our friends, the period of our communion; in our adversity, of whatever kind, the day of our prosperity. Thus we may in a manner perpetuate our enjoyments, and with them our gratitude; the pleasure may not be so pure and lively, but it is by no means unreal. Our blessings may administer to our comfort, even after we are deprived of them; the present may be made more happy by the re-

membrance of the past. The perverseness of mankind, it is true, very often employs their recollection to increase their misery: they may use it for a better purpose; and is not this a state of mind, after which it is desirable for ourselves and dutiful towards God, that we should carefully aspire? But,

We may add finally, That our comforts, though dead, are in very many instances not absolutely lost to us: they still live in their influences and their consequences. All our past enjoyments, though the immediate instruments or sources of them be no more, have each had their efficacy in the great chain of Providence, have each contributed their share to form the present conjuncture of our circumstances, and to give their present aspect to our affairs. Affluent if you have been, you have derived some benefits from that affluence that remain with you in your poverty: and if any man has had a kind, a wise and pious friend, though it may not be in his power perhaps to specify them, he must have derived some benefits from that friendship that will live with him, long after that friend is dead; and it may be, long after he is dead himself. The same might be said of many other blessings once enjoyed and then lost again; ought we not then, though we have lost them, to give thanks?

So good was the Apostle's counsel, so wise are they that keep it. "In all things, therefore, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father—This world we know is a changeable and imperfect scene, in which all our comforts and delights are subject to perpetual danger; may we rejoice therefore as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not, knowing that the fashion thereof soon passeth away. May we never be weary or faint in our minds, but may we run with patience and alacrity the race that is set before us.

As we call ourselves the disciples of Christ, may we habitually exercise and assiduously cultivate, that spirit of ardent piety, that entire devotedness to thy will, which so eminently distinguished and adorned his character. May the power of thy glorious gospel to impart the truest dignity, and the noblest consolations to the human mind, from day to day be manifest in our temper and in our conduct; in every good disposition, and in all worthy conduct, may we continue and abound still more and more: in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, may we make known our requests unto thee; and do thou, O merciful Father, uphold, and support us, and keep us from falling, till we be presented faultless before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy.

DISCOURSE VII.

MAN, THE PROPERTY OF GOD.

PSALM cxix. 94.

Lord I am thine, save me.

THESE are the words of the King of Israel, addressed to the supreme King of kings ; and although in one sense they might with perfect justice be adopted by every creature he has made, yet there are other senses in which they could properly be applied by none but those happy persons, who could safely appeal to God for the uprightness of their hearts, and the integrity of their conversation. The true Christian, he, who to faith unfeigned, has added a sincere and improving holiness, may adopt them in their full extent. As proceeding from such a character, we shall consider them at present, and shall show, in the first place, what they may be understood to signify, and afterwards briefly point out, the useful purposes to which they may be applied.

Lord, says the good man, I am thine ; which may signify,

First, I am thy creature, thou madest me, and not I myself. When I look back through a few years that are elapsed, I presently arrive at that period, when as yet I had not a being. I cannot

own the instruments of my existence for its cause and origin ; for how should they, who are unacquainted with the human structure, who cannot themselves boast an independent being, who know not what my spirit is, and are even incapable of imitating my outward form, how should they breathe into me the breath of life, or of what inspiration are they possessed, by which to give me understanding?

But, as there is no other mortal to whom I can ascribe my being, so neither can I be persuaded that I exist through any blind necessity of nature ; I understand not what that assertion means ; I leave it to those who are capable of doing it, to account for intelligence, without a designing cause. I know very well what my own conceptions are, when I say that I was created by some superiour power, by some invisible intelligence.

When I observe how fearfully and wonderfully I am made, when I contemplate the structure of my body, and the economy of my mind, I discern such illustrious proofs of power, wisdom, and goodness, as mark me for the workmanship of a nobler artist, and bid me look to heaven for the maker of my frame.—When I consider how much I am dependent on the world around me, when I reflect how my various powers are accommodated to its various objects, when I see how amply it is furnished with every thing necessary to supply my wants, and to promote my comfort, I cannot but conclude, that he who made the world, made me also ; that the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is the Father also of the human race. Lord I am thine, thou madest me.

Secondly, These words may likewise express another sentiment, viz. As I am thy creature, so also am I thy charge; made by thy hands, by thy hands I am supported. As my life was originally the gift of God, so it is his providence that continues and sustains it. When I look into the world around me, I see the vacant places of many a dear companion of my infancy and childhood; my fathers, where are they? my brethren and my friends, are they all living now? They who came before me, are gone before me; and of multitudes that came with me into life, many have long ago taken up their residence, in that dark and silent house which is appointed for all the living. Who has made me to differ from another? Why am I among the living, and not among the dead? Why was I not long ago cut off from all farther capacity of usefulness and possibility of improvement? Whence is it, that amidst so many dying lamps, my lamp is burning still? Whence is it, that I yet have it in my power to grow in grace and to make ampler preparations for eternity? Is it through any innate vigour of my own? is it the effect of my own prudence, the result of my own care? Alas, I am weak and frail and impotent as others, as unable to redeem myself, as to redeem my brother from the grave. I am totally ignorant by what means to prolong my being, and cannot even promise myself the completion of the hour that is now begun.—No, blessed God, I am thine; thy charge; thy care; in thy favour is my life; it is thy food that feeds me; it is thine air by which I am refreshed; it is thy blessing on my industry that supplies me with all things needful and convenient for me; it is thine arm on which I lean; it is thy shield by which I am encompassed. A thousand dangers hover round my head, and the seeds of a thousand

mortal maladies are within me ; amidst such infinity of deaths, who but God could have preserved me ? It is having obtained help from God, that I continue hitherto !

Thirdly : Lord, says the good man, I am thine, the creature of thy power, the charge of thy providence ; I also am thy subject. When I look into what lies below me in the rank of being, I observe that all things fulfil the purposes and obey the ordinances of God. I see that his will is done by the animal creation, the earth, and the heavens. But they obey him unconscious of their obedience ; they know not whose they are, and whom they serve. I find within me a nobler principle ; I know my master, and I know his law. Mine is a conscious, voluntary service. The things that are seen reveal to me “ the Maker’s eternal power and dominion ; ” and the frame of nature, and the course of providence, instruct me concerning his character and government. All things, both around and within me, convince me of my absolute dependence upon God ; and the native, uncorrupted sentiments of my own heart, appear to me invested with the power and authority of a law from the Father of my spirit. Something there is within this breast of mine, that assures me I am not accountable to myself alone ; that I am not only to answer for my conduct to my fellow creatures of mankind, but that I am amenable to a higher tribunal. I feel within me unconquerable forebodings of future happiness or misery : these I am necessitated to regard, as the sanctions of the law of God. While I am good and do good, my hopes of happiness are lively ; when I fail in duty, my hopes languish, and my apprehensions rise. Yes, blessed be God ! I know his name ; his law is not hidden from me, and my obli-

gations to obey him are complete. His gospel hath confirmed what his finger hath engraven on my heart. I own him for my Father and my God, and I do homage to him as my Lord and King. Subject I am to parents, masters, and rulers, but my obedience to them is an act of obedience also to God; and I am accountable to him for the reverence in which I hold those, whom his providence hath set over me. But my subjection to earthly Lords, is limited and mutable; they may abuse their authority, and then my obligations of subjection are annulled; as they change, my allegiance changes, and perishes, as they perish; but the throne of God is for ever, and his dominion endureth throughout all generations. No injunctions of an earthly master can absolve me from the duties that I owe unto him; no changes of my being can relax my obligations unto God; living, dying, dead, reviving, I am his subject, and must be so for ever.

Fourthly: Lord, says the good man, I am thine, thy creature, thy care, thy subject; yea more, I am thy property. Let him dispose of me as he pleaseth, shall he not do what he will with his own? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein; for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." I take possession of a portion of his earth; I take possession of the inferiour creatures; mine I call them; I dispose of them according to my pleasure, and never once suspect myself of injustice or impertinence. What right have I to them which God has not, in an infinitely juster sense, to me? Do I preserve and support them? Did I make and fashion them? Was it my word or power that brought them into being? Is not the same great God our common Maker and supporter, and

therefore our common owner and proprietor? Yes, Lord, I am thine.

In the fifth place: Lord, says the good man, I am thine, not only by the necessity of nature, by the inevitable circumstances of my being, but thine also, by voluntary choice, and deliberate agreement.

It depended not on myself whether I would be thy creature, thy care, thy subject, and thy property; these I was before I was capable of knowing it; these I am, and these I must be. But, blessed be God, there is something dependent on myself, by which I may testify my reverence of his glory, and my gratitude for his benefits.—The cheerfulness of my homage cannot be a matter of necessity; the joy of my obedience, cannot be extorted. This I have of my own to offer unto God, “to delight myself in him and in his law:” it depends upon myself, that he who must of necessity be my ruler, should of choice also be my Lord: his creature I am, but it rests upon my own determination, whether I will revere him as my Maker: the care of his providence I am, but it remains in my own breast whether I will gratefully acknowledge his beneficence: among his subjects I am, but it must be my own deed to live faithful to my allegiance: his property I am, he may dispose of me as he pleaseth, but it must be my own to rejoice in such an owner: to acquiesce in his dispensations, to triumph in his government, and to devote myself to his service; this must be my own.

Take me then, great God, take me into the number of thy people, own me for a free, a voluntary, and a cheerful servant, for all I have, and all I am,

is thine. The world I know is a fallacious flatterer; sin is an oppressive tyrant; the service of the flesh is infamy and bondage; the service of God is perfect freedom, and in keeping his commandments there is great reward. How happy am I, that I have a heart to give him for his benefits! How do I rejoice in this privilege of my nature, that I can serve him with my whole soul, that my obedience may proceed from choice, not compulsion! How does my spirit triumph in the Lord, that among all the competitors for the duty and affection of mankind, I can despise every interfering claimant, and resign myself wholly unto him who made me? Who can plead a better title to me? who will provide for me a better portion? who will cherish me with such tender mercy? Unworthy indeed I am, great God, but though unworthy, I am not insincere, far be from me the liar's tongue, and the hypocrite's pretence: it is, thou knowest it is, my desire and joy to do, and bear thy will. O that thou wouldst enkindle in me a zeal that never should grow cold in thy service, and strengthen me with a strength that should never languish or decay! Joyful is the expectation, and truly blessed is the hope, that the day is coming, when I shall have done with the avocations and incumbrances of mortality; that the day is coming, when I shall see thee face to face, and serve thee, as I wish to serve thee, with unwearied activity and unspeakable delight! Often, O thou all knowing God, often hast thou heard me in the exultation of my gratitude crying out, Who have I in heaven but thee, and what is there upon earth that I can desire in comparison of thee? Often hast thou heard me, from the depths of affliction, and in the anguish of my spirit, professing thee to be my trust and confidence, my only portion and my only hope. Often

hast thou seen me, numbering myself among thy people, owning those obligations which no duty can repay, and taking up those resolutions which eternity only can absolve ! These sentiments I would cherish, these engagements I would ratify. I am not my own, but the property of God, and I would be his for ever.

In the sixth and last place, I would observe, that the good man may adopt the language of the Psalmist in yet another sense, herein appealing to the condescension and to the promises of God that he will accept, and keep, and save all those who sincerely and diligently obey him. "Ye shall be to me a people," saith he, and "I will be to you a God." "Come out from among the children of impenitence and unbelief, and I will be to you a father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty." "To godliness belong all the promises of this life, and of that which is to come." "In it all the promises of God are sure and certain ;" Then saith the Christian, Lord I am thine, thou, the maker of my frame, art my Father and my God ; all that is included in thy favour, is my portion and my right, such hath thy promise made it ; humbly do I appeal to thee for the sincerity of my repentance, of my faith, and duty, and with equal humility would I claim of thee what thou hast most graciously condescended to propose to me. Often have I blessed thee, that my virtuous friends would own me ; I have often blessed thee, that those who could contribute to my comfort in any form, would own me ; often have I blessed thee, that my pious parents would call me theirs ; but if thou, great God, wilt own me, if thou wilt call me thine, if thou wilt adopt me into thy family, and write my name in the book of life, after this, what have I to fear ? and beyond this, what have I to wish ?

Having thus illustrated the words of the text, and considered it as expressing the sentiments of the good man's heart, it remains now that I should intimate some useful purposes to which it may be applied.—In the first place,

1. If we be the property of God, how highly reasonable is it, that we should study and obey his will.

You honour and obey your parents, and herein you do well. If any man feed, and clothe, and provide for you, you are modest, humble, grateful, and herein you do well. You are submissive, respectful, and faithful, to those who are set over you in authority, and herein you deserve our imitation and our praise. If any man deposit his property in your hands, you would dread the very thought of violating your trust, or of injuring your brother, and herein you prove yourself faithful and just. Remember then, that you are the creatures, the dependents, the subjects, the property of God; let your sentiments and conduct towards others, respecting each of these relations, instruct you in the sentiments and conduct which you ought to maintain towards the great Lord and ruler of the world. But more particularly,

Secondly, If you be the property of God, you have the highest reason to be thankful to him for every comfort, and to be resigned under every affliction.

Had you been possessed of an independent being, had you been strictly and properly your own, had it been of your own accord that you had received the benefits, and become the subjects, and owned your-

selves the property of God, you might then have pleaded that it was not an absolute, but a conditional engagement: you might then have received his bounties, as what were in justice due to you, and murmured against every thing that was unacceptable in your circumstances, as a violation of the treaty you had made with God: but, if you be his without any merit in becoming such; if you be his to do with you whatever seemeth to him good; if you have no claim of right on your Creator, how highly does this consideration enhance your obligations to him for every comfort of your existence? How indecent, how impious, how unnatural is it to murmur at any thing which he may appoint!

In the third place, If ye be God's, not only by the necessity of nature, but by your own deliberate choice and your own voluntary engagements, consider how highly it behoves you to be steady to your choice, and faithful to your vows. If you suspect that you have determined rashly, think again: consider whether you can find a better master, or engage yourselves in a more gainful service. Remember that it were better for you never to have known the way of righteousness, than after having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you; and tremble, lest to the guilt of profaneness and of rebellion, you add the accessory guilt of perfidy and falsehood.

In the fourth and last place, If we be God's, if owning him for our lawgiver and our judge, he owns us for his people, and his children, how solid is the ground on which our hopes are built, and how secure our happiness! Whatever comes to us, comes to us for our good, for it comes to us from an almighty friend, who knows our state,

and tenderly regards our interests. Though there may be some things in our condition which are not for the present joyous, but grievous, yet if we be God's, God is ours, and if God be ours, what security can we want of an ample indemnification in futurity? Afflictions are very tolerable when they are not the ministers of wrath; and prosperity is doubly acceptable when we can receive it as the testimony of divine favour. The men of the world are apt to boast themselves of their felicity, but if they now prefer the world to God, the time will come, when they will praise the Christian's choice. Their pleasures will decline, his will be improving; their hopes will vanish away, his will be more than realized; their confidence will fail them, but the Christian rests upon the rock of ages. In the time of apprehension and of fear, in the hour of trouble and affliction, in the moment of death, in the solemnities of judgment, they will want, what the world cannot give its votaries; and what God only can bestow. In these trying seasons, when every thing about those who are without God, is dark, and gloomy, and distressing, the Christian, supported by his conscience, and encouraged by the divine promises, can derive light and comfort from the relation that he bears to him in whose hands are the fates of every living thing. When all sublunary comforts have taken their flight, when human friendships can no longer avail, the hope of the Christian remains uninjured, for in this world he placed not his happiness:—he had long fixed it there, where true joys only are to be found, whether he is now going to reap that glorious harvest, the gracious reward of his faith, patience, and obedience; for he knows who it is that hath said, "be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

PRAYER.

O LORD we are thine by ten thousand ties, for thou art our Father, the Author of our being, with all its powers, its comforts, and its hopes. By our own choice also we are thine, for whom have we in heaven but thee, and what is there upon earth that we can reasonably desire in comparison of thee? Thy favour is our life, we will seek it with our whole hearts; and we thank thee for the comfortable assurances thou hast given, that even by us, unworthy as we are, thy favour and thy friendship may be obtained; for "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, though he be angry with the wicked every day:" "The Lord God is a sun and a shield, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." O that our hearts were directed always, to keep all thy statutes, then should we never be ashamed, distressed, or dejected in thy presence, when we had respect unto all thy commandments!

There is a day, we trust, approaching, the hope and prospect of which is the support and triumph of our souls; there is a day, we trust, approaching, when all they that have continued faithful unto death, shall have done with sin, and sorrow, and infirmity, and satisfied with thy perfect likeness, shall be for ever happy in thine heavenly presence! In the meantime, O God, let thy grace be sufficient for us; confirm us in all our holy resolutions; establish us in the steady government of our own hearts and minds; raise us into such

superiority to the short-lived pleasures of this present scene, that we may never be seduced by them from our allegiance unto thee.—While we live, may we live unto the Lord; when we die, may we die unto the Lord; in life, in death, and to eternity, may we be thine, henceforth, and for ever.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE OBLIGATION, THE IMPORTANCE, AND THE REASONABLENESS OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

MARK xii. 30, 31.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, this is the first commandment; and the second is like unto it, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

IN the history of our Lord we read, that as he was teaching in the temple at Jerusalem, one of the Scribes, having heard him reasoning with the Sadducees, and perceiving that he had answered them well, was so highly pleased that he had put to silence these adversaries of the Pharisees, to whose sect he himself belonged, that he was desirous to make a further trial concerning his knowledge of the law, hoping probably that what Jesus might reply to the question he was about to propose to him, would be equally favourable to his own opinion, and as humiliating to those, who differed from him. With these views he addressed Jesus as follows: "Rabbi, which is the first commandment of all?" alluding, it is probable, to the divisions that subsisted among the Jews concerning this subject; some giving the chief place to the law of circum-

cision; others to the law of sacrifices; others again to some other part of their ceremonial appointments; and some few, in the number of which it seems was this lawyer himself, giving to the moral precepts the preference justly their due, and considering all these contentions as vain and frivolous, while justice, mercy, and faith, were overlooked and disregarded. The answer of our Lord in the text, fully accorded to the expectation of the Scribe; and the historian goes on to relate, that he replied, "Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God, and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

Such was the sense of Moses, whose words are quoted by our Lord, such also was the sense of Christ himself, and such, as appears from the reply that the lawyer made to him, are the natural convictions of the human heart, concerning the obligation, the importance, and the excellency of the love of God. Religion is the one thing needful, and the love of God is the first great principle of religion, the place of which nothing can supply, and for the want of which nothing can atone. Love is the very spirit of Christianity; it is the affection that breathes in every page of the gospel, it distinguished the temper of its Author, and is by him given as the characteristick of his followers. It is the affection which Christianity has placed above faith and hope, which she delights to honour, which she labours to inculcate, which she represents as the parent root of all other virtuous affections. as the fountain of peace in this world, and a title to happiness, in that which is to come.

The two great objects of Christian love, are, God and man; our Creator and our brethren. God, as the source of all excellence and happiness; and men, as they are formed in his image, the creatures of his power, and the children of his family.

It is on the first of these topics, namely, the love of God, that I mean to dwell at present; I shall therefore place before you some observations relating to the causes of this affection, and the foundations on which it stands, or the considerations whence it flows; or, in other words, endeavour to show you, why we do, and ought to love God.

In the first place, The unspotted purity, the impartial justice, the inviolable truth, the invariable fidelity, and the disinterested benignity of God. do most righteously challenge the pure and ardent love of all his intelligent creation. The heart that understands what these things are, and is capable of contemplating these attributes of deity, must be sunk into deep depravity, if, beholding the almighty Father arrayed in all the beauties of holiness, rejoicing in his works, disposing all things according to the weight and measure of wisdom and of equity, and ruling all things with equal impartiality and tenderness, it does not feel itself elevated with a sacred joy, in so sublime a contemplation; if it does not find itself kindled into the devout affections of reverence and love. A heart duly penetrated with these views of the divine perfections, will necessarily conceive these sentiments, and feeling their blessedness, will wish to prolong them in itself for ever; and to communicate them, as well for their own sakes, as for their Creator's glory, to every other heart within its reach and influence. But to proceed,

In the second place; We ought to love God for the happiness enjoyed by others, as well as for those blessings in which we ourselves are partakers—not only for his perfections as they reside in himself, but on account of their operations as they are beneficently exerted towards others.

The human heart is not naturally, and till it be perverted, cannot become uninterested in the happiness of others. Their miseries instantly awaken our compassion, and if a false self-interest has not laid us open to the influence of jealousy and envy, the sight of their happiness is a considerable addition to our own. We love the patriot, or the sage, the publick benefactor, who has contributed to augment the sum of human happiness, however distant the age or country in which he lived, although we ourselves can have reaped no benefit from his exertions. The affection he bare unto the human species at large, gives him an interest in our hearts, and we think ourselves indebted to him for the benefits he conferred on those who were no otherwise related to us, than by the similitude of their nature, their character, or circumstances. Those scenes of happiness, which we never shall experience, which we never shall behold, fill our hearts nevertheless with pleasure and delight. By that power of sympathy, implanted in our breasts, by the wise and gracious Author of our frame, we not only may, but unless we are become miserably depraved, we must, in some measure, enjoy that happiness which we conceive to be enjoyed by every other human being. We therefore, most reasonably, and most naturally, consider ourselves as partaking in their obligations, and look upon ourselves as bound to go along with them in their gratitude. If they be unmindful of their ob-

ligations, we are so much more impressed with the goodness of their benefactor, who deserved not their ingratitude; if they be duly sensible to his beneficence, we approve their characters; our love to them increases our love to him who does them good, and we go along with them in all the just and ardent expressions of their gratitude. As soon as any man becomes capable of contemplating the happiness of others with indifference, and ceases to take any interest in their welfare, so soon he becomes an object of disapprobation and of censure, not only unto others, but also to his own mind. If such then be the uncorrupted, and approved sentiments of the human heart, with respect to the happiness of others; if it thus hold itself under obligation to regard the benefactor of a single family, a town, or a province, as a benefactor to itself; apply this principle to the great universal benefactor, and say, with what sentiments of love, veneration, and delight, your hearts ought to embrace him.

Is it needful to illustrate this proposition? to unfold the considerations on which it rests?—Reflect then, with regard to the comfort of the human race, how divine mercy, having endured from everlasting, promises to endure unto everlasting still: consider, how partial evil conduces to general felicity; how the temporary sufferings of individuals, often prove the means of greater happiness both to themselves and others; how they flow from that very same constitution of things whence all their blessings spring: observe, what heartfelt satisfactions, and ineffable delights, proceed from the consciousness of virtue: and, when you have collected all these things together, then say, if as a father pitieth his children, the Lord pitieth not them that fear him? Add to this, the benignity that appears in the con-

stitution of the world, how the sinner is invited to repentance in the dispensation of divine grace; add together all that this world gives in possession, and in hope; to temporal, add spiritual blessings, and then say, if it be not reasonable, if it be not their indispensable duty, that men should praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works unto the children of men?

In the frame of nature, in the course of providence, in the productions of the earth, in the vicissitudes of the seasons, in the fruits of industry, in the advantages of commerce; in the good will and good offices of mankind; in the comforts of domestick life, in the blessings of friendship, of civil and political society, in the power of habit, in the joy of possession, in the anticipation of hope; in these, and in many other instances that might be distinctly enumerated, the most liberal supplies are granted us, not only for the comfort, but for the delight and entertainment of our lives. Look upon the earth, and behold with what beauty the goodness of God has adorned the place of our habitation; consider how the same general laws of nature, and the same general course of providence prevails throughout every region and every climate of the world; dispensing with liberal hand the common benefits of life to men of every language, and of every country: consider further, that the most important blessings are the most common, those which are most necessary to all, withheld from none; and then say, if the tender mercies of God be not over all his works?

While every object we behold bears testimony to every sense, that God is love; while all around us from every region of the earth, the voice of joy,

if not of gratitude, is ascending to the throne of the most high, owe we nothing unto God that he has spread so fair a scene of happiness before our eyes? Owe we nothing unto God that he has provided so various, extensive, and satisfactory an entertainment for our sympathy and good will? Are the pleasures of benevolence, the only pleasures that we do *not* feel? the only joys that are unable to awaken our gratitude and love.

In the third place, We ought to love God on our own account; on account of the numerous and important blessings for which we ourselves are indebted to him. Let us, each of us, examine strictly the circumstances of our present situation, try to enumerate the various mercies we enjoy, and we shall find their number swell far beyond what those who have not been accustomed to such an inquiry, could suspect or imagine.

Self-love, in every degree of it, is neither an unjust nor an unamiable affection. It is then only, when it degenerates into a base self-interest, which would serve itself at the expense of others, that it becomes the object of indignation or of censure: while it is merely confined to what respects our own real interests, and neither neglects nor interferes with the interests of others, it is natural in its operations, reasonable in itself, and deserving of approbation. Of self-love, it is the necessary consequence, that we should love those, by whom we are beloved. If any one contribute to the gratification of our wishes, for the very same reason that we desire these wishes to be gratified, we love him who gratifies them. If any person do us good, for the very same reason, that we love ourselves, and delight in our enjoyments, we love and delight in

that person: if then we know God, and attend to this important truth, that not a being in the universe possesses any power but what was originally derived from him, and is even during every succeeding moment supplied from that eternal fountain; if we reflect, that, by whatever means we become possessed of them, all the blessings we enjoy, do, in very deed, come down from "the father of lights;" from God, "the only giver of every good, and of every perfect gift;" if we know assuredly, that our capacities of enjoyment, as well as the various blessings which are the subjects of them, proceed from God; what reason have we not to delight ourselves in him, and in his laws, and to embrace him with the chief and first affection of our hearts? It is because we have obtained help of God, that we continue hitherto; it is under the shadow of his wings, that we dwell in safety. The daily supplies of life proceed from his unwearied bounty; all the comforts that we have in ourselves, or in our friends, flow from the God of all consolation.

He has but to speak the word, yea, he has but to withdraw his arm, and our resources fail us, our hopes are blasted, and our blessings vanish. It is but for a few particles of matter to change their disposition, and they are changed as easily as the dust is scattered by the wind; it is but for such a change to take place, and we, or ours, go down in a moment to the grave. They have but to take another turn, and more terrible calamities may overwhelm us; our tranquillity, or that of our friends, may be converted into horror; our ease, into agony; the lamp of reason may be utterly extinguished; the wildest imaginations may riot in our minds, the most distressful thoughts may seize

them, and abide with them; and even all the joys of a good conscience, as well as the light of an improved understanding, may be totally overborne.

And owe you nothing then to *his* guardian care, who with more than a parent's tenderness watches over, defends, and preserves you from these, and a thousand other evils? Owe you nothing to that liberal hand, without which you had not been fed from day to day, and without which, your habitation every night might prove your grave?

Compare, my friends, your blessings with your merit; did he owe it to your obedience to love you thus? Did he owe it to your services to make such liberal provision for your comfort? What says your heart? what does your conscience say? Do they require it of you to distinguish your benefactors, in proportion as you have been distinguished by them in their good affections and good offices? and will your heart and your conscience hold you guiltless, if your first, your supreme—I was going to have said, your *sole* benefactor, have no place in your affections?"

Go then and give unto your mortal friends, the love that is justly their due; render unto your patrons and benefactors the gratitude they may reasonably expect from you; repay your parents, with an affection, as sincere and tender, as that with which they have nourished and cherished you; but remember, that they and all their kindness were the gift of God; that to him you are indebted for every pleasurable sentiment, every sensation of delight and joy; and then declare, if it be not a duty of indispensable obligation, to keep his statutes, to obey his commandments, and to

love him with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength?

These reflections it were easy to amplify and enlarge, but enough, it is hoped has been advanced to convince you. that the love of God is not a blind inexplicable principle, proceeding we know not whence, and tending we know not whither, and consisting in we know not what; it is not an unaccountable attraction; it is not an unenlightened glow of heart; it is not the overflowing of a sensual joy; it is not the ecstasy of a mysterious devotion; it is nothing above the capacity of all men to understand, or above the power of all men to attain; nothing contrary to, or surpassing human nature: it needs not to hide itself for fear of disgrace, for it has no connexion with the perversion of any human principle; but, on the contrary, it is in the depraved heart alone that it cannot subsist: it has no dependence on ignorance or darkness; on the contrary, it is only from true and important knowledge that it can proceed.

The love of God is one of the most natural operations of the human heart, the most obvious and self-approved direction of its sentiments; for it is to admire, what is perceived to be truly admirable; to esteem, what is infinitely worthy to be esteemed; and to cherish in our hearts with complacency and delight, the idea of what confessedly deserves our supreme affection: it is, to cultivate a grateful sense of kindness that exceeds our tenderest thoughts, and of beneficence that passeth knowledge.—To be devoid of the love of God, not only betrays an unnatural opposition to the dictates of self-love, and of charity; but also to that other powerful and amiable principle, by whatever

name you call it, which recommends all moral goodness to our hearts. It implies a strange insensibility to our own happiness, to the happiness of our brethren, and to the noblest obligations ; a criminal prostitution of our affections, and a perverseness and inconsistency of character, alike wretched, deplorable, and guilty.

If then, my friends, there be in you any spark of that nature, which God gave you, unextinguished ; if there be in you any characters and principles of reason ; if there yet remains in you a wish to approve yourselves to conscience, and to enjoy the approbation of your own minds ; maintain the noble privilege of your species, for man only, among all the inhabitants of this world, is capable of loving God. Maintain the honour of your character ; it shines most illustriously in the honour you render to your Maker. Reasonable and moral beings you were made, you were formed with principles that might assimilate you to God ; that might direct your thoughts and affections towards heaven, and the great King of heaven : the principles that God implanted in you, tend to unite your hearts to him, to preserve you from corruption, to purify you from pollution, to raise you to the honour of unblemished righteousness ; to prepare you for the happiness of loving him, and of being beloved by him, and for the immortal glories of his presence.

This, O man, is the dignity for which thy nature is intended, and which is prepared for it of God. Suffer not this honour to be tarnished, or to die away ; suffer not this glory to sink from shame to shame, till at last, in the complete depravity of thy soul, the love of God be utterly extinguished : but

cherish, with unwearied care, every principle that leads to so glorious a distinction ; to so just, so blessed an affection.

PRAYER.

WORTHY art thou, O Lord, to receive salvation, and blessing, and praise, for all things are thine ; thou madest them in perfect wisdom, and thou rulest them in perfect love. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season ; thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desires of every living thing. We, the creatures of thy power, and the dependents of thy providence, feel and acknowledge ourselves bound by ten thousand obligations, to fear, to love, to serve, and to honour thee ; to inquire into thy mind and will, with care, and diligence, and to keep thy precepts with alacrity and zeal. Lord, when we meditate upon thy kindnesses and benefits, which have been ever growing, with the growing moments of our being, and at the same time reflect upon the coldness of our devout affections ; on the languor, the reluctance, and the manifold imperfections of our obedience ; when we compare thy mercies which never fail, with that goodness of ours, which is as the morning cloud and the early dew, that soon passeth away, we are ashamed and confounded in thy presence, and what can we say unto thee, O thou observer of men ?—Our unworthiness cannot be unknown to thee, for whither could we go from thy spirit, or whither could we flee from thy presence ? What night is there so dark, or what shades of death so deep, as to hide our transgressions from thine all-pervading eye !

Thou knowest every sentiment and purpose of our souls : if thou seest that we are duly humbled under the sense of our past insensibility and ingratitude, help thou our infirmities, and enable us henceforth to serve thee with a zeal, bearing some proportion to the extent of our obligations, and to love thee with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE CARE AND DILIGENCE REQUIRED TO
PRESERVE, AND KEEP ALIVE THE
LOVE OF GOD.

JUDE 21.

Keep yourselves in the love of God.

REASONABLE as it is in itself, and most important to our own happiness and to the preservation of our virtue, that we should love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and mind, and strength, the text plainly implies, that there may be some difficulty in preserving and cultivating this divine affection. It may be useful therefore to inquire, from what causes this difficulty proceeds, and by what means and methods it may best be overcome. And here we may observe, that,

The habit of attending to things visible and invisible, and of pursuing them as important objects of our wishes and desires, in proportion to the vigour it may add to the influence of such objects on our hearts, will, in the same proportion, diminish the influence of such as are purely spiritual; these, from their very nature, are ever wont to escape the notice of the mind, and even, when our attention to them is once awakened, without great care and diligence, they easily, and almost without our observation slide out of it again. The impressions of external things, which are constantly operating upon us, even

if they are not the objects of our most ardent pursuit, presently displace the impressions of such objects, as require the exertion of our attention and resolution to apprehend and retain them in view : it is only therefore, by a deep and continued attention, that any vivid affections concerning spiritual objects can be kept alive in our hearts. That attention however, to a mind not long habituated to it, is a painful and laborious effort. Again,

The very means by which the love of God must make its impression, are themselves capable of excluding it from our hearts, and instead of leading us to him, of engrossing our affection and attention to themselves. The works of God, the laws and events of providence, and even the word of God itself, are all capable of exciting in us many different sentiments, besides the love of him ; sentiments that have no connexion with it ; and that, in some instances, are even repugnant to it.

We may gaze upon the works of nature, and be highly entertained with the views that they exhibit to us ; we may attend to the course of providence, and be deeply affected by the various scenes through which we pass ; we may have the word of God every morning and every evening in our hands, and yet, for all this, the love of God may be a stranger to our hearts—a stranger there it will be, if, whilst we are conversing with his word, his providence, and his works, we have it not in our intention and desire to conceive and to cultivate this affection. Each of them present a variety of objects in every scene that they set before us, capable of exciting a variety of affections : and unless, whilst we contemplate this variety, our attention be particularly and expressly directed to the display manifested by them of those attributes of God, which render him the object of

our admiration and love, our minds will be diverted from one object to another, and distracted by a succession of very different impressions and affections.

To love God, we must have lively apprehensions of his excellencies, and to attain these, our attention must not spend itself on those sensible and external things which comprehend the notices of them ; it must not be wasted on the mirror, it must look upon the image it contains ; it must not be diverted by any foreign object, but fixed and regulated by the sincere desire, and the express intention to possess our hearts with the love of God. And, after all, to whatever degree of vivacity this affection may be raised by the power of serious contemplation, it will quickly need to be revived again. It is a plant too delicate not to stand in need of constant and unwearied tendance, and perhaps, with all our care, it may be impossible in this world that it should at all times be preserved in equal health and vigour. Yet, the influence of the love of God upon our temper and conduct, may be, and ought to be habitual. To render them habitual however, it is necessary that the impressions of the divine excellencies should from time to time be renewed upon our hearts ; that the affection should from time to time be rekindled there, and that the intervals of renewing and rekindling these impressions and affections, should not be too distant.

Though the effects of any sentiment upon our temper and conduct may remain after the sentiment itself has subsided in our hearts, yet these effects will be impaired by the power of time alone ; and the succession of other sentiments will assist the power of time to impair them. The influ-

ences of any affection whatever, which survive the affection itself, will be in proportion, not only to the vivacity in which the affection is conceived, but also to the frequency with which it is cherished and revived.

They who are best acquainted with the love of God, in whose hearts it is most familiar, and over whose lives it has most power, can tell you, how much this sentiment, and the salutary influences of it, are liable to suffer from the cares of this world; even from the necessary avocations and the indispensable business of life. They can tell you, how this affection needs to be refreshed from day to day, by serious conversation with the works, the providence, and the word of God. They can tell you, what power it derives by withdrawing from the cares and influences of the world, to attend upon the ordinances of religion; and they can tell you too, how necessary a devout and habitual attendance is, not only to its improvement, but even to its preservation. With all their solicitude and care, they do not boast of its vivacity and power; they regret the interruptions that it often suffers, and the weakness in which it often languishes: their comfort is, that God knows their frame and their condition, that they can appeal to him for their sincerity, and trust his mercy as to their imperfection. If, then, we are really desirous that the love of God should retain its due influence, we must, in the first place, exert a constant vigilance to guard against the various unfriendly influences of the many different objects by which we are surrounded, and of the various occupations in which we are necessarily engaged. But this is not all; for,

In the second place, it is of the utmost importance that we should sedulously endeavour to re-

press every evil inclination, and to preserve our souls an unpolluted temple for the residence of the living God. And to this end, we must labour to employ our thoughts in such salutary meditations, as, by convincing us of the baseness, the malignity, the ignominy, and the wretchedness of sin, shall establish us in the perfect detestation of it; as well as in that wholesome self-discipline that may reduce every rebellious passion, and restore those principles, in which our likeness unto God consists, to their just authority in our hearts; not, however, suspending any of those religious exercises, the immediate tendency of which is to awaken in us the sentiments of divine love, until this object be completely accomplished; for, if by any means, the love of God can be lighted up, and kept alive within our hearts, it will be found one of the most powerful instruments to rescue us from the bondage of evil habit, to fortify us against the power of temptation, and to establish us in the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is not therefore, either necessary, or advisable, that we should neglect to cultivate this blessed principle till all inconsistent principles be removed; but, as the prevalence of iniquity will obstruct the progress of the love of God, and render even the preservation of it extremely difficult, it will be our wisdom to call in every other principle and exercise of our understandings and our hearts, that may succour and befriend it. And in this view, the fear of God may co-operate, and be made subservient to establish and improve the love of God. For, when we consider him, not only as hating iniquity, but as preparing the scourge of chastisement even in this world, for all unrighteousness; and contemplate the approach of that awful day which shall consign the ungodly and sinner

to wrath, tribulation, and despair in that which is to come; we are furnished with additional aids, to effect an easier and speedier reformation of whatever is wrong in our temper and conduct.

Many bonds of union might be traced between these two greatest and most active principles of religion. What has been said, however, may suffice to show, that whatever tends to break our attachment unto vice, of whatever kind; whatever tends to restrain our inordinate desires; whatever tends to abash our evil inclinations, does at the same time tend to promote the power, and to facilitate the operations of divine love, in the conflict which it must necessarily maintain, if it be pure and genuine, against every thing that is inconsistent with truth and virtue.

But, in the third and last place; it is of especial importance if we be seriously desirous of preserving and cultivating the love of God, to beware of an earthly mind. We cannot serve God and Mammon.

To the worldly-minded man, gain is godliness; it so busily engages his thoughts, so perfectly satisfies his low desires and narrow wishes, that he perceives no need, and perhaps can scarcely conceive an idea of any happiness beyond this, or besides it. By what means shall such a groveling spirit be raised to just conceptions, and delightful sentiments of God? What can such a man discern to allure his thoughts or engage his affections in that liberality, that overflowing goodness of the Almighty, which, whilst it admonishes him that it is more blessed to give than to receive, rebukes, at the same time, with so much severity.

his own principles and temper? As far indeed as he is interested in this liberality, and actually benefited by it, he may possibly conceive something like the sentiments of religious gratitude and joy; yet, if you consider how natural it is for such a character to be wholly engrossed by what he already has, or wishes to obtain; to regard all he possesses, merely as the fruit of his own ingenuity, care, or industry, you will not readily suspect him of so much infidelity to the idol deity he worships, as either ardently or frequently to lift up his soul unto Him, who is the great and sole giver of every good, and every perfect gift.

The love of God, like the word of God, can neither thrive nor live among the weeds of worldliness; though the seed be sown, though it begin to vegetate and open, yet the soil is too shallow for it to strike root; it will be devoured by the vultures of earthly passions, or scorched and withered by the heat of base, ungovernable, and envious desires. If then, so base a principle as that of worldliness has got root within our hearts, let us pluck it up with unrelenting indignation. If our hearts are happily uninfected by it, sensible of its infamy, of its danger, and irreconcilable inconsistency with the nobler principles of our uncorrupted nature, and our Christian calling, with the love of God, and all those great and glorious and blest affections that accompany it, that flow from it, and are nourished by it; sensible of its inconsistency with all that can adorn our characters on earth, or prepare our souls for heaven; let us keep our hearts with all diligence; let us walk circumspectly, lest we fall into the snares of this world; let us walk vigilantly, lest by its seducing blandishments, it insinuate itself into our affections; let us study to

attain just notions of its value in itself, and of its importance unto us.

Are the possessions of the world, the possessions of the soul? Do they infallibly carry with them comfort and delight? Are they capable of being enjoyed in all the circumstances, do they remain unaltered through all the vicissitudes of life? Are they stable and secure; proof against all dangers, subject to no violence, liable to no change or revolution? While they soothe one principle of our nature, do they no violence or injury to any other? While they flatter, do they never wound us? While they gratify, do they never mortify our souls? While they smile and promise fair, do they never disappoint us with sudden frowns, and betray us into vain distresses? Are they as desirable for their consequences, as for themselves? Whilst they possess the mind, exclude they not thence any other valuable enjoyment? Are they attainable by all? Are one man's acquisitions of them, no obstruction to the interests of another, no cause of discontent, no object of jealousy or envy? These, my brethren, are properties that by no means belong to this world, its possessions, and felicities; they are, for the most part, the noble, and the precious characteristicks of those good affections, of that approving conscience, of those spiritual joys and celestial treasures, which alone are worthy of the warm desires and pursuit of a moral and immortal being; in which, true riches and honour alone consist, and without which, whatever else you have, and whatever else you are, you can neither be happy, safe, nor easy.

What a portion is this world's goods, for a moral, an intellectual, and an immortal being, made

in the Divine Image, and capable of partaking in the glories of a Divine Nature! What folly does it argue, what a wretched choice, what an abject taste, to take up our rest on earth, when the gates of heaven are thrown open to us! To content ourselves with a low, an insincere, and short-lived happiness, when pure, sublime, and everlasting joys are set before us! What a wretch is that, who can delight to grovel with the insect in the dust, when with Angels he might soar into the presence, and aspire unto the friendship of his Maker! How unworthy is he even of that happiness which this world can give, who is capable of resting in it as his end, the completion of his wishes, and the satisfaction of his desires!

But what is the happiness that this world can give? Can it defend us from disasters? Can it protect us from diseases? Can it preserve our hearts from grief, our eyes from tears, or our feet from falling? Can it prolong our comforts? Can it multiply our days? Can it redeem ourselves or our friends from death? Can it soothe the king of terrors; or mitigate the agonies of dying? Can it deliver us from the bondage of iniquity; cleanse us from the pollutions of guilt; or ease our burdened consciences? Can it restore, or sanctify the mind that we have depraved? Can it purchase for us a favourable issue in the day of final retribution, and insure to us an honourable portion, and happy settlement in the unchangeable and eternal world? If not, wherefore is it so high in our esteem? If it be so weak, and impotent, and vain, if it have so little influence on our most momentous interests, both in this life, and in another, why does it lie so close unto our hearts? Why should it light up such keen desires, and create such invincible attachments? When my conscience is oppressed with

guilt; when I am alarmed with the apprehension of a future reckoning, what is the world to me? What comfort, or what hope can it administer? When my conscience bears testimony to my integrity and virtue; when my hopes of a future recompense are just and lively—what is the world to me? What need I from it? What want I of its consolations? When my heart is torn with grief, or oppressed with melancholy; when my limbs are racked with pain, or my body languishing in sickness, what is the world to me? That my habitation is splendid, that my roof is gilded, that my dependents are not a few, and my treasure not a little, does this afford me any mitigation of my anguish? When the period of life has overtaken me, and the awful messenger of death has read me the summons of my departure out of it, what is the world to me? When I lie upon a dying bed, watching my ebbing life, expecting every breath to be my last, and waiting for that solemn moment, when the world invisible shall open on my soul, what is this world to me?

Anticipate that solemn moment; it will be with you in reality ere long. Place yourselves on the verge of time, imagine that your course is finished, that your glass is run out; and from the margin of eternity, look at the approaching and at the receding world: how vast, how sudden, how inexpressible a change in your conceptions and affections! how much is the one world magnified; the other, how much diminished in your view! Arrived at such a period, things seen and temporal, all that we possessed, and all that we wished for upon earth, shrink into vanity and nothing: things spiritual and invisible, all that we esteemed so lightly, and neglected so unreasonably in the moral and eternal worlds, swell into infinite importance, and appear to us all in all. How insignificant are the

possessions that lately were so much prized, and in which we so much vaunted ! How cool and languid the desires that lately were so fervent and so restless ! How indifferent our regards to this world, which lately were so cordial and sincere !

Why am I so enamoured of a vapour, that appeareth but for a little while ; of a vapour, on which before it perisheth, my eyes may be for ever closed ? A stranger and pilgrim upon earth, why should my treasures and my heart be fixed, where my days are as a shadow, gliding hastily, constantly, and incessantly away ? Hurried as I am down the stream of time, shall I set my heart on the fading flowers, that grow upon its banks ? No, I must not be so injurious to myself ; I must not be so ungrateful to my Maker. The creature must not hold the Creator's place in my esteem. The world must not banish God from my heart. Eternity must not be sacrificed to the little interests of time.

Cease then, thou momentary world ! cease, ye seducing vanities, flatter us no more with your glowing colours, and seductive smiles. Peace, ye disturbers of our rest ! Peace, ye vain imaginations, why are you so busily employed to give the world a false importance, to set it forth in fallacious visions, to divert our souls from God, and to rob our Creator of our hearts ? Let the living God be our portion and our stay ; let heaven be our home and aim ; let us not despise, yet let us not overvalue this present world ; let us bless our Maker for its comforts, while we pray to him to preserve us from its snares. " Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him ; for all that is in the world, the lust of the

flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."

PRAYER.

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who art, and who wast, and who art to come! From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! Surrounded as we are by ten thousand objects that continually solicit our attention, interrupt our progress in spiritual attainments, and call our affections off from thee, enable us, we humbly beseech thee, to be ever on our guard, that they gain not the dominion over us; that they overcome not that love to thee, which ought ever to be the ruling principle, and which constitutes at once, our duty and our happiness!

The time we know is short, and uncertain as well as short, may we therefore use the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion thereof soon passeth away.—All flesh is as grass, and all the beauty thereof, as the flower of the grass,—the grass withereth and the flower fadeth, but the goodness of God abideth for ever. While we continue steadfast in his covenant, we are persuaded that nothing shall ever separate us from the love which God hath to us.—O may nothing ever cool our love to thee, or at all abate our diligence, zeal, and alacrity in thy service! The life that we now live in the flesh, may it be by the faith of the son of God; thereby may we finally overcome the world, and be presented faultless before the throne of thy glory, with exceeding joy.

DISCOURSE X.

ON THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE LOVE OF PLEASURE, WITH THE LOVE OF GOD.

PART I.

II. EPIST. TO TIMOTHY, iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleasure, more than lovers of God.

DEVOTION is by no means the characteristick of the age. The love of pleasure is one of its most striking features; it has infected every rank of life; it discovers itself upon every occasion; we meet with evidences of it in every district and in every street. Even though the general manners were not advanced so far, in nominal refinement, but in real depravation, as that men were already become lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God; yet, whoever is acquainted with the allurements of pleasure, and the seducibility of man, could not be absolutely free from apprehension, that when once the love of pleasure is become the fashion of the times, it will continue and even prevail, in despite of the most vigorous efforts of the friends of virtue and religion, to subdue or to restrain it, till its pernicious consequences, by inducing general calamity, have fully demonstrated how mischievous and ruinous a principle it is. In such conjunctures, though we cannot

turn the torrent, we may perhaps do something to contract its ruinous effects—we ourselves at least may step aside out of its course, and may have the power, perhaps, of taking some that we love along with us.

In the following Discourse therefore, it is my intention to show you, that there is a real opposition between the love of pleasure and the love of God. But before we enter upon this topick, it may be necessary to observe,

In the first place, That we mean not to affirm this concerning every species of pleasure ; and,

In the second, To point out some of the causes which have unavoidably occasioned considerable confusion both in our ideas and language upon this and similar subjects. And

First, We mean not to affirm this concerning every species of pleasure ; because the greater our sensibility to moral pleasures, and the higher our delight in them, the more lively and the more powerful will be our love of God. Neither would we affirm it concerning every degree of the love of pleasure, in any meaning of the term ; because the love of pleasure is a natural principle, made necessary by the great and beneficent Author of our frame, not only to our well being, but even to our existence. All our affections are implanted in us by the Author of nature, and are then only vicious, when they are perverted to those objects to which he has not directed them ; or, when their degree, either through excess or defect, corresponds not with the measure of those qualities in any object by which they are respectively excited : and it is only in some

or other of these circumstances, that they become sinful and inconsistent with one another. While every passion of our hearts is directed to its proper object, and continues in its just degree, so long the gratification of them is practicable and consistent; they encroach not upon each other, and none of them are either criminal or disgraceful.

But, in the second place, it happens, that although we have names for many of our affections, significant of their general nature, significant also of the affection in its excess or its defect; yet, in very few instances are we provided with different terms whereby to distinguish it when indifferent, neither laudable nor blameable, from the same affection in its excess, in which, it is in one way criminal, or in its defect, in which it is criminal in another way. Pride, and anger, are two censurable passions: the one being the excess of that affection that is naturally excited by the consideration of what is worthy in ourselves; the other, the excess of that affection, which insults necessarily awaken. But, for these affections, in their *general* nature, in which they are indifferent; or in their defect, in which they are faulty, we have no appropriate terms. If we would speak of them accurately and usefully, we must describe them in several terms, and carefully distinguish them from pride and anger, which are the names only of the excess.

From this narrowness of language arises much confusion in our ideas, giving birth to many prejudices, which, in their effects may be hurtful to the comfort, and even to the good conduct of life; and hence it becomes necessary, to attend closely, and distinguish accurately, when either the nature,

or the obligations of man, are the subjects of our meditation or discourse.

For that affection, or rather for that class of affections which we comprehend under the denomination of the love of pleasure, we have only this single term to signify its general nature; we have no names to distinguish it according to the different objects it embraces, nor even to express its excesses or defects. Unless we enter into a particular description of them, we have nothing but this general term by which to express all these various sentiments, and all their different degrees. But it is obvious, that with regard to some objects of delight, our love of pleasure cannot be criminally weak, although in regard to others, it may be blameably defective; in respect to some sources of delight, it is not probable, it is not perhaps possible, that it should run into excesses, in respect of others, it is very prone so to do; and there is hardly any class of pleasures, in respect of which there is not some degree of affection that is innocent, because natural and unavoidable: hence it follows, that what is true of any one thing, which we call the love of pleasure, is by no means true of all that we mean at any time by that name.

The pleasures spoken of by the Apostle, between which and the love of God we proposed to show you that there is a real opposition, are those which we derive from sensible and external objects. In respect of these, there are two different species of the love of pleasure, which although, in the higher ranks of life especially, are often combined, may however, subsist apart, and when they do, they constitute two different characters; the one pursues the gratifications of a vain imagination, and

forms the character of the giddy and the gay; the other, the gratification of the inferiour appetites, and forms the character of the carnal and debauched. The hearts of the one, are in scenes of dissipation and amusement, and there is their sovereign enjoyment; the delight and desires of the other, are in scenes of sensual indulgence, in making or enjoying the provision they have made, "for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."

It is not difficult to perceive, that there is a real opposition between either of these species of the love of pleasure and the love of God; for in the first place, it is obvious,

That it is the natural effect of both, to divert the attention of the mind from those discoveries of God, out of which the love of him must take its rise.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth is full of the riches of the Lord; "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth us," how worthy he is of our affection. The sedate and thoughtful will receive these lessons, they will feel their influence, and will rejoice from day to day in the benignity of their Maker. God deals with his creatures according to the faculties he has given them. We may know him if we search after him, but the discoveries he makes of himself, are neither of such a nature, nor made in such a manner, as to force their way into a mind indifferent to this divine knowledge; they will not obtrude themselves upon us, while our hearts and thoughts are employed upon other objects, and engrossed by very different pursuits. Our religious affections depend upon our religious knowledge; and both, on our attention and endeavours to obtain them. The excellencies of an

unknown God can make no impression on our hearts; neither can the knowledge of God be acquired, or improved, in scenes of vanity and dissipation, or amidst the ferment of licentious pleasures, and irregular desires. A mind, inflamed by the expectation, or intoxicated by the enjoyment of sensual pleasure, hears nothing that either Nature or Providence deposes concerning God, their author. Their calm, still voice, must be listened to, in order to be heard; and attended to, in order to be understood.

It is not when the heart is captivated by the frivolous amusements, or when the eye is dazzled with "the pride of life," that we can see, or are disposed to see the manifestations of the glory of God. So long as our views are attracted by the glare of worldly vanities, or centred on the object of some sensual desire, the discoveries of God's glory, however obvious, and however clear, will elude our observation; they will be to us as if they were not. If the current of our affections be directed towards sensible objects, and the force of habit have once fixed them in that channel, it will carry all our thoughts along with it, and will leave us little inclination, and indeed little power, to employ our attention upon any thing, that has not some obvious relation to those scenes and objects in which we have our principal delight. It avails not that our general apprehensions of God, his character and government, may be just. General apprehensions are always too languid and obscure to awaken the affections of the heart. It is only by a serious and continued attention to the particular displays of the perfections of God, that the correspondent sentiments can be excited in our breasts: while our attention is engrossed by other objects, whatever we may know of him in general, our love to him will not rise.

In the second place, There is a real inconsistency between that love of pleasure which the Apostle censures, and the love of God, in as much as it has a natural tendency to render our hearts insensible to those excellencies of the divine nature, which are the causes and the objects of that affection, which we call the love of God.

It is one natural effect of religious truth, wherever it is clearly discerned, and cordially embraced, to increase our sensibility to moral excellence, to raise our ideas of the importance of moral worth; whilst, on the contrary, the school of pleasure has never been recommended as a school of moral sensibility. It has often been lamented, that, by the enchantments of pleasure, the finer feelings of the human heart, its attachment unto moral excellence, its thirst after true glory, its admiration of whatever things are "just, true, pure, lovely, venerable, and of good report," have not only been enfeebled, but suspended, and not only suspended for a season, but sometimes laid asleep for ever. But our love of God depends upon the moral sensibility of our hearts, for it must arise out of our perception of the moral excellencies of his character. In his eternity, he is awful; in his omnipotence, he is tremendous; it is in the moral glories of his character, that God is the object of our esteem, our veneration, and our love. It is his purity, his equity, his veracity, his fidelity, his love of virtue, his abhorrence of unrighteousness; his attention to the wants, his condescension to the frailties of his creatures, his tender mercies, and his liberal beneficence which extends itself to all his works; these are the perfections that we love in God, and in proportion to our sensibility to the excellence of these perfections, will be the vivacity of the love

we bear him. If we discern nothing excellent in these, we shall discern nothing excellent in God, except those attributes of independence and of power, which, separated from his moral glories, would render him an object of terrour, rather than of love. If our hearts are become so callous that these moral beauties can make no impression on them, the love of God can have no admittance there.

What think you, Christians, is not levity an enemy to piety? Can the love of God maintain itself in a life of unceasing dissipation? Is it in a round of frivolous amusements, is it in the crowd of ostentatious vanities, that the taste for moral dignity is to be acquired? Is it hither you would send us to improve and cultivate our relish of moral beauty and of spiritual excellence? The mind that is capable of prostituting its affections to those vain and trivial things, is that mind capable of any deep impressions from the moral excellencies of its Maker?—Is that mind capable of so noble and so elevated an affection as the love of God? Can the soul that dotes upon the gayeties and splendours of the world; that aspires to no higher happiness, than what they can bestow; that centres all its wishes and pursuits on these, can that little soul expand itself to admit the influences of its Creator's glories?

But if this be true of that species of the love of pleasure which constitutes the character of the giddy and the gay, what shall we say of the carnal mind?—Look into the frame of the human heart—Look into the world, and you will presently be convinced of the destructive influences of voluptuousness and sensuality, to deprave our principles,

to impair our powers, and to lay waste all the beauties and honours of the mind. Whence is it, that the men of pleasure are usually as licentious in their principles, as they are libertine in their conduct? Is it not that, whatever tends to enliven or preserve their moral sensibility, tends to show them to themselves in an unacceptable light? mixes the gall of bitterness with their pleasures, and must be shunned by them at whatever expense? Is it not that, whatever, on the contrary, tends to deaden or destroy this sensibility to moral worth, cooperates with their love of pleasure, which has itself the same tendency, and encourages them to walk "in the ways of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes?"

To love God, is to delight in him; but what delight can he take in God, whose chosen friends, the companions of his unworthy pleasures, are the meanest and most detestable of mankind? What delight can he take in God, whose soul is so much engrossed, one while by the pursuit and the anticipation, another while by the enjoyment of the basest gratifications, that God perhaps is not in all his thoughts? What delight can he take in God, who has fixed his portion and his happiness in licentious pleasure? Divested of the understanding that discerns justly between the things that differ, divested of the freedom that prefers those that are most excellent, unable to raise his thoughts to the contemplation of the Deity; at least unable to relish so refined and so sublime a pleasure, can a wretch like this have delight in God? Hardened into such insensibility to every thing that is worthy and excellent, to every thing, that honourably distinguishes the nature, and which dignifies the soul of man, what love can such a heart conceive for the pure, the holy, the spiritual excellencies of God? What joy will he entertain in the contemplation of the

divine government, so full of mercy and of love ; or what affection will he, whose heart is contracted within the narrow sphere of its own meanest interests, what affection will he conceive towards that God, whose glory and whose praise it is, that ‘ his tender mercies are over all his works ? ’ Sensuality is a gulf of bottomless perdition, where every thing noble, respectable, and excellent is lost. It renders us inattentive and insensible to those excellencies, and the displays of those excellencies of his, whence the love of God proceeds. It would be almost as reasonable to look for this amiable principle in the abodes of hopeless misery, as to seek for it in the corruptions of the carnal mind. The carnal mind is the grave of reason, of virtue, of devotion, of honour, of happiness, and of hope ; it is the disgrace and the curse of man ; it is both the enemy and the abhorrence of his Maker. If you are ashamed of reason and of conscience ; if you wish to bid adieu to all that is great, and good, and celestial, and divine ; if you have no satisfaction in those sublimer powers of your frame, by which being like to God, you might approach him, and enjoy his favour, bury them in the abyss of sensual indulgencies, that you may abandon yourselves without restraint to the dictates of the carnal mind. But remember, licentious Sinner, remember, that once buried there, they may revive no more ; once dead, and their death sealed by ~~thy~~ determined profligacy and impenitence, they are dead for ever ; the sacred sentiments of virtue will live no more within thy breast ; the flames of divine love will animate thy soul no more. All is over with thee as to heaven and eternity, and the few short hours that remain of mortal life, will add little to thy pleasure, but much to thy dishonour : and when this world has resigned thee, where wilt thou be found ? To whom wilt thou

repair for comfort? Whither wilt thou betake thyself?—To heaven? Alas, there dwells that God with whom, in the day of thy probation, thou didst live at enmity: There dwell those holy spirits who seek their happiness in the divine favour, and give up all their powers to the influence of his excellencies, and the fulfilment of his will: These, in truth, are the only mansions of light, and life, and joy; but there nothing enters that defileth; all is spotless purity, and ardent love.

Beware, my friends, beware ye of the carnal mind; ‘it is enmity,’ saith the Apostle, ‘against God;’ the completion of it is miserably fatal; its excesses are dreadfully dangerous; every degree of it wars against the soul, invades its peace, destroys its comfort, and threatens to dispossess it of those divine affections which it is its duty, its honour, and its happiness to entertain. Like all other vicious habits, it begins, perhaps, insensibly, and proceeds by degrees to its completion: the first approaches, therefore, towards it, ought to excite your fear, and employ your vigilance.

PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY and most righteous God! Thou art great, and greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all those that come nigh unto thee. Ever mindful of the snares and dangers by which we are surrounded, of the allurements of pleasure, and of our own manifold infirmities,—may we be enabled to keep our hearts with all diligence, that nothing may ever find admittance there, that will not bear the eye of God. Pardon, we beseech thee, whatever thou mayest have seen amiss hitherto, in our temper

or our conduct, and may it henceforth be our invariable resolution, that, whatever others do, we will serve the Lord.

Sanctify us throughout in every principle of our nature. May we not be conformed to this world, ensnared by its licentious principles, or seduced by its fleeting and unhallowed pleasures; but may thy grace, which brings salvation, teach us, denying all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and piously, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. May we ever keep it in remembrance, that if we hold out unto the end, our day of recompense will be proportionably glorious and happy, and by the patient continuance in well doing, may we seek for glory, honour, and immortality, till we have obtained the crown of life.

DISCOURSE XI.

ON THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE LOVE OF PLEASURE, WITH THE LOVE OF GOD

PART II.

II. EPIST. TO TIMOTHY, iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleasure, more than lovers of God.

THE heart of man is contracted or dilated according to the objects on which its affections are employed. Are they mean and trivial? Great, and noble, and important objects may present themselves before it, but they will leave no impressions there. Are the objects great, and noble, and important, to which the stream of its affections has been ordinarily and habitually directed? whatever objects do not answer to this character, though they may make some faint and transient impressions, will solicit the dominion of it in vain. It is not from the giddy and the gay; it is not from the vain and the dissipated, from those who are devoted to the frivolous pastimes, or the glaring pageantry of life; it is not from these that we expect any great achievements in the serious affairs even of this world; we reckon, and experience justifies that account. that they are incapable of conducting them; we expect to find, and experience ordinarily justifies the expectation, that they are incapable of being properly impressed by them.

It is not in a heart like this, that you look for any great degree, or any wise exertions of parental tenderness, of filial affection, or of faithful friendship. This is not the character in which you would wish to clothe either your fathers, or your children, or your friends; and wherefore? what reason can you give for that reluctance to conceive of those with whom you are thus connected, under such a character, but the persuasion which experience of human nature and of human life, has wrought in you, that levity consists not with any just sensibility of spirit?

It is a very serious truth, to which the attention of this age should be perpetually called, that levity, as well as sensuality, may superinduce an impenetrable callousness upon the human heart; and in time, through the power of habit, may render it absolutely unimpressible by the weightiest and most interesting objects in the universe. It should be reminded also, that the love of pleasure, from which both these affections spring, is a contagious passion, the principle subsists in every heart, is inseparable from human nature, and may easily be kindled into an undue degree of ardour. Its excesses easily communicate themselves from heart to heart; the fire runs and spreads and diffuses itself far and wide.—Alas, you need not look far into the world, to see the exemplification of this melancholy truth! Of you, my friends, I would hope that, to engage you to beware of so pestilent a principle, I need not to urge you, with any other argument than this single consideration, that you cannot reconcile the love of pleasure with the love of God. If, to be conformed to this world, be inconsistent with your conformity to the image of the son of God, you will not suffer yourselves to be

carried down by the tide, either of prevailing vices, or of fashionable vanities. You know that, upon your conformity to his image depends the dignity of your character, your peace of mind, your hope in God while you live in this present world, and your safety also and happiness, in that eternal world to which you are going; "for, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."—On your love to God, you know, depends his love to you; whoso honoureth me, saith God, I will honour, but whoso despiseth me, shall himself be lightly esteemed.

And can you, Christians, can you, to the love of pleasure, sacrifice the love of God? If the maxims, the manners, and pursuits that prevail around you, are injurious to this sacred principle, you will step aside out of the stream in which it would be extinguished. The pleasures of sin, you well know, are but for a very short season, and for these, surely, you will not relinquish your hope and expectation from his mercy, which endureth for ever!

It is no pleasing prospect to be a spectator of the vices and follies of men, but it is a much better state than to be a partaker in them. Who would not choose to stand, though it were alone, upon the rock of ages, loving God, and beloved by him, than to plunge into the downward current of licentious pleasures and unprofitable vanities, although thousands of all that the world calls great and honourable were embarked upon it, and invited him to join them? If therefore it appears to you, that the love of pleasure is inconsistent with the love of God, in any degree inconsistent with the subsistence, the establishment, or the growth

of this heavenly affection, the character of the text will not be your character; whatever becomes of the love of pleasure, you will hold fast your love to God. If you must deny yourselves, it will be in the meaner, rather than in the nobler affections of your nature; you will disdain a life of pleasure, if you cannot find it in living unto God. But, even this sacrifice, small as it would be in comparison, will not in ordinary cases be rendered necessary; for,

It is to the honour of true religion, that it is a reasonable service; that it requires of us no rigorous austerities, or superstitious mortifications; that while the service of vice is absolutely incompatible with the gratification of all our natural principles, and requires the sacrifice of the best, to the indulgence of the meaner passions, Religion provides for the gratification of them all. By the proper regulation of their objects and their measures, she reconciles their interfering interests; and it is by the observance of her precepts alone, that they can be made harmonious and consistent. To gratify one vicious passion, it must often happen, that another vicious passion must be mortified: the benefit and pleasure of every vice, so far as there is any benefit or pleasure in them, cannot be combined together: but all the virtues harmonize perfectly with each other, and with religious pleasures; may live together in the same heart; and do not, necessarily, exclude from it any one innocent enjoyment.

Where the love of God is the sovereign principle, the love of pleasure may have its sweetest gratifications; but, where the love of pleasure is the sovereign principle, there, the love of God must

languish and decline. Where the question is, how may I recommend myself to God? where his approbation is made the great end of life; there, whatever he hath given us the capacity and the opportunity of enjoying, with innocence and prudence, will naturally be embraced by us, as an agreeable, at least, if not a laudable concurrence with the kind intentions of our Maker, and the friendly invitations of his providence. But, where the only question is, in what can I indulge myself? where amusement and enjoyment is proposed as the great end of life, there, the love of God, if it could be supposed that there was a capacity of relishing devotional enjoyments, is an object, by no means sufficiently obvious and sensible to be taken into the account of happiness; it is of too remote and refined a nature to be sought after by the sensual, for the sake of the pleasure it affords.

Will the carnal mind exert itself to make invisible and spiritual things the objects of its deliberate contemplation? will that which it relishes in the works of God, lead on the carnal mind to the perception and the adoration of his moral glories? Will these be the chosen subject of its thoughts; and to cherish the sentiments that belong to them, its desire and delight? Can the carnal mind conceive a purpose so remote from its habits and its pleasures? Will it willingly, will it seriously, will it frequently employ itself in the creation, in the providence, and in the oracles of God, with the intention to excite and to enliven its affection towards him? If its Creator's excellencies can indeed excite any good affections in it, will it watch over the affections they have excited, that they may not in its intercourse with other things

be extinguished or die away? Will the carnal mind be jealous, lest, in its familiarity with sensible and external things, it should contract an indisposition towards religious sentiments and affections, or an inability of conceiving them with vivacity and readiness? Will it therefore often be returning to those religious meditations and devotions, which have power to renew the impressions when they are decaying, to revive the love of God when it is languishing, and to keep our hearts as sensible as they ought to be, to spiritual, moral, and eternal things? Will the carnal mind have these solitudes, and employ these means from time to time to perpetuate upon it the influence of the love of God? If you cannot believe this, neither can you doubt, that there is a real inconsistency between this species of the love of pleasure, and the love of God; for without the exercise of such solitudes, and the application of such means, even in the mind that is not carnal, the love of God cannot be maintained in any tolerable measures of vivacity and power. Again,

If such solicitude, care, and attention, be needful to maintain and cultivate this divine affection, can it flourish, can it live in the hearts of the giddy and the gay? Will they, to whom thought is fatigue, who fly from amusement to amusement to save themselves from their own minds; will they be induced, will they be able, to abstract their thoughts from visible and external things; to fix them on God who is a spirit, whom no man hath seen or can see, and all whose excellencies are spiritually discerned?—But what need have we to reason on the subject? Did ever any one expect to find a man of pleasure at his devotions? delighting in the opportunity of retiring to his closet; pleased to indulge the sacred sentiments of religion, and

assiduously cultivating the love of God? Is it the men of pleasure that crowd our religious assemblies? Is it the men of pleasure that adorn our sanctuaries with a truly decent and serious demeanour? with an appearance that betrays no constraint, no uneasiness, no impatient dissatisfaction, or indifference? Is it the men of pleasure that sanctify the day of God?—But it is not necessary in behalf of the doctrine I maintain, to multiply these inquiries; even with themselves I may lodge the appeal: it is no part of their pride that they are religious; this is a character that they are more apt to deride than to affect; they do not, ordinarily, even pretend to be devout.—Yet, my friends, suffer not yourselves to be deceived; let no man conclude that because he hath not fully arrived at the open contempt or even at the total neglect of religion and religious ordinances, that therefore he is not a lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God. True religion cannot subsist with the love of pleasure, but the form of godliness may consist with and encourage it. The offices of devotion, both publick and private, may be performed, may be regularly and habitually performed from very different motives, and for very different ends. To nourish the spirit of devotion, to promote the love of God, they cannot be performed, where the love of pleasure is the ruling principle;—to deceive the world, to deceive the persons themselves, they may. Try your devotions, do you mean to be really religious, or to appear so? In reflecting on them, do you consider the fruits of genuine piety that have arisen out of them; or, are you more disposed to attend to the merit you think there is in them; and under the consideration of this merit, to excuse or to connive at those indulgences, of which you have at least some suspicion that they are not right? If it be so, your piety is

irreligion, and however unwilling you may be to believe it, however averse to have others think so, you are indeed lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

But to return, You are saying to yourselves, perhaps, that your pleasures are none of them forbidden pleasures, and that you need not to be warned against the practices of which you are not guilty. Indeed, my friends, I would gladly hope, that to warn you against pleasures that are decidedly licentious, to exhort you to beware of criminal indulgences, whether of appetite or imagination, would be superfluous and impertinent. You, I would willingly persuade myself, have not so learned Christ—You are too well acquainted with his doctrine concerning the conditions of acceptance with your Maker, to think of reconciling the hope of future happiness, with the indulgence, either of the “lust of the flesh, or the lusts of the eye, or of the pride of life” in any forbidden instance, or by any forbidden means. But is it unknown to you, that no man suddenly becomes abandoned? Is it unknown to you, that vice steals into the heart by imperceptible degrees, and acquires her dominion over us in such manner and by such means as may be least alarming? Is it unknown to you, that she allures our approaches towards her, first by one step, in which considered in itself there may be nothing blameable, and afterwards by another, which compared with the former may be very little different from it, till, at length, by differences so minute that they escape our notice, or perhaps even encourage our advances, she accomplishes the greatest revolutions in our character, and alters it from good, to less good, from less good to evil, from evil, downwards through its various stages, till we arrive at last at the most abandoned?

Is this, my friends, unknown to you?—Are you so ignorant of the deceitfulness of sin, of the power of habit, and the influence of example, as, that in an age when the love of pleasure seems to be continually gaining ground upon the love of God, the caution to beware of it should be deemed superfluous? It cannot be. Vice ever lays hold on some natural propensity to bring us into her power; a good reason surely why we should keep an attentive eye and a steady rein upon these principles of our frame that are most seducible, and the more steady, and the more attentive, in proportion as external circumstances favour their undue increase, or encourage and facilitate their corruption.

If there be, as you have seen there is, a real opposition between the love of pleasure and the love of God, it behoves us at every time and in every scene, to set a guard upon this principle; but, in a scene and at a time in which almost every thing around us, tends to induce, to inflame, and to embolden this principle, it behoves us to be doubly vigilant and resolute to restrain its wanderings, and to check its growth.

I will suppose, if you will have it so, that you neither are guilty, nor in danger of becoming guilty, of any such voluptuous indulgences, as, considered singly, and in themselves, are criminal; yet you have no reason to conclude from this, that in respect to the love of pleasure, either your temper or your conduct is what it ought to be. Though none of your pleasurable gratifications, considered singly, be criminal either in their nature or in their degree, yet, notwithstanding this, your character may still be exceedingly inexcusable and unworthy. It is not merely the criminal gratifications of this passion

that are inconsistent with the love of God, it cannot consist with even a prevailing taste for pleasure. Where the desire and the pursuit of pleasure have formed and fixed the habits of the mind, there, in that mind, there is no room for the love of God. Sensuality and levity of spirit, though they should be so restricted, by regard to credit, or to interest, or by any other principle, as never to break out into any flagrant violations of the law of God, are, nevertheless, where they constitute the temper of the heart, irreconcilable enemies to the genuine love of God.—Do not then, my friends, soothe yourselves with the thought, that your pleasures are neither of the basest nature, nor indulged to an extravagant degree; consider what your temper is; what are your prevailing affections; what are your habitual pursuits? Is pleasure, not spiritual or moral, but worldly pleasure of some species or other, the idea that first meets you in these several inquiries?—You are not then uninterested in any admonition that warns you to beware of the love of pleasure. Do not flatter yourselves with the reflection, that carnality or levity is not your appropriate character.

A prevailing taste for the gayeties of the world; for its entertainments and amusements, though they be fashionable; for its games and pastimes, though they be much practised, if not in every instance equally ruinous, yet is as really incompatible with the genuine sentiments of devotion, and with the principles of pure and undefiled Religion, as that carnal mind which you pronounce to be highly ignominious, and the enjoyments and pursuits of which, it may be, are cordially despised by you, or perhaps even held in absolute abhorrence.

Would you then wish to love God? Do you acknowledge this to be the subject of the first and great commandment? Do you own it, for what indeed it is, the fundamental principle of all practical Religion? Do you believe, that they who love not God, have nothing to hope for from his friendship? Beware of the love of pleasure? it has a natural tendency to deprive you of the purest pleasures of the present life, and at the same time to disqualify you for the sublimer happiness of the life that is to come.

What will be the pleasures of the world when you are arrived at that hour, beyond which you can stay no longer in it? Such an hour you know will come, and you do not know how soon. What think you will be the reflections of the carnal mind on its sensualities, when death is pulling down the fleshly tabernacle, and the soul is starting forth into the invisible and spiritual world? When it is going into the presence, when it is going to the judgment seat of God, will its sensualities stand instead of piety? will a life devoted to the pleasures of this world, stand instead of a life devoted to the service of God? Will the vain, the giddy, and the gay, they whose happiness consists in the amusements of the world, and the entertainments of a roving and capricious imagination; will they be happy when all the amusements of the world, when all their wonted entertainments, when flesh and heart, and every earthly consolation fails them? Will they bring their gayety along with them into that serious hour? Will their levity attend them through the vale of death, and carry them with comfort through the solemnities of judgment? Will it recommend them to the friendship of their Maker? Will it entitle them to a blessed immortality? Will it qualify them for the

business and the happiness of heaven, that, with a gay unthinking heart, they passed through life, delighted with its vanities, unimpressed by its importance, inattentive to its business, and careless of its end? Will it cheer them in the solemn season of their dissolution, that in spite of every admonition to bring them unto serious thought, and to engage them in the proper business of life, their insensibility, giddiness, and levity, had still maintained itself uncorrected? Will these be sweet reflections, capable of soothing their departing pangs, capable of enlivening the gloom of death? Will they then feel no want of the sentiments and hopes of piety? Will they then suffer nothing, for having permitted the vanities of this life to exclude the Author of their being from their hearts? Whose will be the most tranquil death-bed? Whose will be the most pleasurable immortality? His, whose probationary period has been wasted on the gayeties and follies of life, or, his, who devoted it to the exercise, to the culture, and the obedience of the love of God? The man who loves this world, will leave this world with reluctance and with terrour. The man who loves God, will go to the God he loves, with pleasure and with joy. In the grave, there is no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; in the grave, there are no objects to entertain a vain imagination. What the men of pleasure call pleasure, suffers many interruptions from the inevitable afflictions of life, and has a certain end, when life ends; and here the immortal fruits of it begin, bitter and distasteful fruits!—But the love of God is a source of pure and stable satisfaction which afflictions need not interrupt, which death cannot end, which the life to come will prolong, improve, immortalize, and perfect.

Beware then of the love of pleasure ; take heed lest it seduce, deceive, and destroy you. Keep your hearts with all diligence, since out of them are the issues of life. Your affections cannot be more worthily fixed than upon him who implanted them within you.—“ My son,” saith God, “ give me thy heart ;” “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,” saith the Son of God, “ with all thy heart, and soul, and ; strength this is the first and great commandment.”

PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY and most righteous Father—Who can understand his errors, cleanse thou us from secret faults ; keep back thy servants also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over us, then shall we be upright before thee, and innocent from the great transgression. Enable us, we humbly beseech thee, to be ever on our guard, resolutely to withstand the first approaches of whatever would alienate our affections from thee, or at all impede our diligence, zeal, and alacrity in thy service !

We thank thee that thou hast given us a law, exemplified in the life of our blessed Lord, to be a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our paths. May it sink deep into our hearts, ever maintaining the dominion there, till at length, through thine infinite mercy, we arrive in the land of everlasting uprightness :—there, may we celebrate an eternal triumph over sin, and sorrow, and infirmity, and satisfied with thy likeness, be for ever happy in thy heavenly presence !

DISCOURSE XII.

CHARACTERISTICKS OF THOSE, WHO ARE GOVERNED BY THE LOVE OF PLEASURE.

II. EPIST. TO TIMOTHY, iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleasure, more than lovers of God.

HAVING already endeavoured to evince that there is a real opposition between that love of pleasure condemned by our Apostle, and the love of God ; the importance of the subject seems to require, in order to assist you in the great duty of self examination, that we should specify some marks or signatures of that character, in which the love of pleasure so fatally prevails. Those marks of it which are most obvious, we shall merely enumerate, dilating upon such only, as may not at first sight appear to be so directly opposed to the love of God.

If, then, to gratify your love of pleasure, you violate the commands of God :—If, through the influence of the same principle, you neglect to do what he requires of you :—If, in gratifying your love of pleasure, you disqualify yourselves for the practice of your duty ; you most assuredly fall under the censure of the text.—Moreover,

If, though your pleasures are not a violation of the law of God, though they do not exclude it from your

regard, nor disqualify you for your duty ; yet, if you believe that they are unlawful, and pursue them still ; or, if you believe that the measures in which you are accustomed to indulge yourselves in them are unlawful ; or, that the means is so by which you obtain that indulgence, and still persist to proceed such lengths, and to seek it by such means ; it is not easy to discover, how you can elude the change, of being lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. Again,

If, though you are not quite certain, yet if you suspect that your pleasures are unlawful ; or that the length to which you pursue them is so ; or that the means by which you seek after them is unlawful ; and yet, uninfluenced by this suspicion, you neither change your conduct, nor satisfy yourselves concerning it, you are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

But, passing these observations, as being so obvious as to require only to be stated to obtain general assent, we now proceed to those remarks, on which we proposed to dilate, in order more powerfully to prove their validity. And first,

If through the love of pleasure you neglect the business of life, you cannot doubt about your character, for the business of life is a part of the work which God hath given you to do ; and if you loved the master above every other object, with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, could you indulge any such extravagant desires after the vain amusements or the sensual enjoyments of the world, as should tempt you to neglect his work ? Wherever true ideas of the business of life are entertained, that business will not, from any motive, be neg-

lected, so long as the heart is governed by the love of God.

Look around you, take a serious survey of human life, observe the necessities to which man is subject, the labours to which he is compelled, the sufferings to which he is exposed, the obligations by which he is bound, and from which he cannot by any arguments persuade himself that he is released; consider what the conduct is to which he is prompted, and what are the issues of conforming to the impulses of nature, or of conscience, or of resisting them, and then say, what you think of this present state; is it a scene of pleasure, or a school of discipline?—Was it meant for a state of idleness, dissipation, and self-indulgence? or, is our term of life a term of service, in which it is expected that we should be diligent in business, faithful to our own best interests, and useful unto all who are within the reach of our beneficence? Were we sent into this world to enjoy its pleasures, or to improve its opportunities? Are our powers and faculties proportioned only to our present state, and incapable of being exalted into any thing above it? Is the gratification of sensual appetite, or of a vain imagination, the great end and object of our existence? Is this in every man's power? Would any man approve himself, if he aimed at nothing more excellent than this? Is this the end to which every other thing is to be made subservient?—to which every other interest is to be sacrificed? Does it import us nothing what we have done in this world, and what character we have formed when we go out of it, provided we have been amused, and entertained, and gratified, during our stay in it? Was it the primary intention of God, in sending us into this world, that we should give the rein to every importunate desire, or that we

should be formed to virtue? Which of these is it that he recommends to us as the first object of our endeavours and pursuits, and in which of these views is it that he requires our cooperation? If the object of God, in sending us into this world, was our complete enjoyment of it, how comes it to pass, that this object is not, never has been, and probably never will be attained in any one instance? If it was not his chief intention to form us to virtue, to all good habits, and to all moral excellence, whence comes it to pass, that there is no state, no circumstance, no single occurrence of the present life, that is not capable of being applied by us to the improvement of our own characters? If it cannot be believed, that in making man, and administering to him his various circumstances, it was the ultimate design of God, that he should spend a few short years in pleasure; then it follows, that he has some business in this world; that every man's peculiar business lies in that sphere in which the providence of God has appointed him to move, and that the proper business of his station, is, in truth, the work of God.—And can any man love God and neglect that work, to gratify himself?

If the magistrate were pursuing his pleasures, while the injured and oppressed were imploring in vain for justice at his gates; if the parents of a family were pursuing their pleasures, whilst their children wanted bread, or, although they should be provided with the necessaries of life, whilst they needed to be formed to useful knowledge, to prudent and virtuous habits; whilst they were in want of example to encourage, as well as of precept to direct them; what would you think of these parents, or of that magistrate? If any man, indifferent about his temper, his conduct, his usefulness, and the prosperity

of his own soul, should desert the proper business of his station to go in quest of entertainment; if this were a constant habit, if this were a frequent practice, what would you think of that man? Could you believe that the love of God dwelt in him? that this was his ruling principle; that he loved the work which God hath given him to do? You could not hesitate in making the contrary decision. You could not for a moment doubt but that this man, that magistrate, and those parents, were lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

But there are some, perhaps, who will be ready to allege, that they have no business, no appropriate work. If it be so, their circumstances must be very singular, and exceedingly deplorable. If you have no work, you have no talents, you have no external possessions by which any living creature can be benefited; you have no knowledge which may be serviceable either to yourselves or others, and you are incapable of attaining to such knowledge, or of acquiring such possessions; you have no faculties that can be improved; none that can be usefully applied; your reason is extinct, your moral life is at an end, and your character is sealed up unto the great day of account.—But how consist these things with the ability to make this an apology for having made a business of pleasure? What, though it be not necessary that you should labour for your own support, or for the support of those who are dependent on you, are there none to be found who stand in need of your relief, your consolation, or your assistance? Are there none who want admonition, to whom your instruction might be useful, your counsels acceptable? Are there none who might be the better for such encouragement as you could give them; who would be thankful for any testi-

mony of your esteem and friendship? Are there none whose spirits you might cheer, whose hearts you might revive, whose darkness you might enlighten, whose troubles you might mitigate, whose happiness you might augment, whose follies you might restrain, whose virtues you might animate, whose labours you might alleviate, whose usefulness you might extend? In such a world as this, can you look around you, and not meet with objects and opportunities to find employment for you beneficence? You cannot go far, if your eyes be not so intent upon pleasure, that you see or observe them not, before they will rise up and present themselves unto you.

But, let the supposition (improbable, or rather impossible as it is) be admitted, that there is nothing wanting, nothing due from you to others; is there nothing wanting, nothing due unto yourselves? have you no work to be done at home? is every thing within your own breasts in that exact order in which it ought to be? is every thing there in such perfection as it might be? If you think so, you will have enough to do to undeceive yourselves, and to acquire a just acquaintance with your obligations and your character:—if you think otherwise, with what countenance can you plead, though it were to your own heart only, that there remained nothing to be done by you in this world, but to pursue your pleasures and amusements? If you have been accustomed to conceive, that they who have no need of worldly occupation to procure for themselves the means of subsistence, are at liberty to give themselves up to the pursuit of any pleasures, that are not in themselves infamous and criminal, it will require no little time, and no little pains to correct so false and dangerous an idea of human life, and human obligations.

There is no living man, if he has not survived his reason and his conscience, to whom there remains not some work, some duty, some indispensable duty, to be done. Is it then any argument of your love to God, that you neglect that duty, that your lives are devoted to pleasure, that you live carelessly, that you are lovers of your own selves?

In the second place, If the love of pleasure so far prevails, as to render you discontented with the condition and circumstances that God hath assigned you, although the pleasures in themselves are all lawful pleasures, just in their means, and moderate in their measure, as well as innocent in their nature, you are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

But, it may be asked, can the love of pleasure, can a lively relish of the world and its enjoyments, produce fruits so austere and ungrateful, as the sentiments of fretfulness and discontent? Can such vexatious passions find admittance and entertainment in the heart, where the love of pleasure reigns?—Why, tell me Christians, do the men of pleasure always seem perfectly contented with their condition?—A cheerful complacency in appointed circumstances, a patient acquiescence in the lot assigned, are these the inseparable concomitants of the love of pleasure? are these in general the characteristicks of the men of pleasure? Look into the world; is the continual endeavour, the eager struggle, the various, and oftentimes the dishonourable expedients that are employed to enlarge their circumstances, that they may give a looser rein unto their pleasures, are these the symptoms of a heart contented and at ease, acquiescing in its circumstances, and well pleased with its condition? If it were

not for the love of pleasure, “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life,” should we see so much of that restless and aspiring spirit which urges all the various orders of men to press upwards into the ranks of those who stand above them? which animates them so constantly to watch every opportunity, use every interest, and employ every art to extend their influence, improve their figure, and enlarge their possessions? What is it that excites this keen desire, that prompts these strenuous endeavours? What is it that gives such vivacity to their admiration, or their wishes, when they look up to the condition of those who stand higher in the world? Has the love of pleasure no share in the production of these effects? if other causes do concur, yet is not this the very root of the evil? Is it not the indulgence of themselves, the more perfect, the more extensive, or the more elegant gratification of their appetites, or of their imaginations, that these men aspire after, in their eager strife to enlarge their worldly circumstances? Is it not this that makes them regard with envy every superiour condition, and that renders them uneasy in their own? Confine your desires within the limits that reason and religion have prescribed, and there will be little danger that your hearts should ever become a prey to the corrosive sentiments of envy and discontent. But, let the love of pleasure usurp the dominion; give the reigns to this pernicious principle; let appetite or imagination govern you, and it probably will not be long that your hearts will remain contented with your condition; your ability must be great indeed, to satisfy the demands of such insatiable and capricious governors:—it will not then be enough, that, in your frame, both the animal and angelick natures are united; it will not be enough that your Creator hath

spread around you innumerable scenes of comfort and of joy. When once you have departed from the line of nature, and transgressed the bounds of reason, another blessing and another may be added, your insatiable desires will not be satisfied, till nothing more be left that can be given, till they have stripped every other being in the universe of its possessions, and placed you on the throne of the most high.—Vain man! whilst devoted to the service of such masters, canst thou be at peace, resigned to thy situation, thinking well of it, as that which divine wisdom hath made choice of for thy good? or, whilst impiously arraiguing the appointments of his providence, canst thou pretend that the love of God is the ruling affection of thy heart? —Is not a cheerful complacency in the circumstances in which God hath placed us, among the certain fruits of that blessed affection?

Tell me, ye who are discontented with your condition, whence that discontentment springs? Inquire into the causes of it; in different instances, these may be different; but in every instance, I am well persuaded, this one great reason will occur, you are not governed by the love of God.—When is it, Christians, that this divine affection is least lively and least active? Is it not when you have been giving way to such reflections on the present state of man, or on your own particular circumstances, as have encouraged the sentiments of discontent to take possession of your hearts? When is it that your hearts are most susceptible of the love of God? Is it not at those happy seasons, when you see most clearly what reason you have to be satisfied with this present state, and with your own particular allotment in it? and if this be so, what doubt can there remain, that there is a natural and necessary connexion between the love of God on

the one hand, and a contented acquiescence in our circumstances, on the other?—"My God, though I know a little, yet am I greatly ignorant of the connexions, that I, and that every thing that respects me has, with that mighty system of beings, in the midst of which I find myself. I am ignorant of the consequences which my present circumstances may produce, but in this I am very happy, that none of all these things are unknown to thee, and I am well persuaded, that the God whom I serve, is love. Dark and narrow as my views are, what an enemy might I, yea what an enemy must I have been to those I love, and to myself, had I been the disposer of my own circumstances?—I rejoice that they are not of my own choosing, but of thine. It may happen, it does happen, that there are those things in them, which, for the present, are not joyous but grievous; yet this, my God, cannot prevent my complacency in thine appointments, nor cool my affection unto thee! Whatever may be the first impressions of thy dispensations towards me, I am well persuaded that the fruits and consequences of them are intended for good; that they may be good, and will be good, to myself, and to all who are connected with me. I rejoice therefore, O my God, in all thy appointments; I envy no other station; my wishes stray not, and they shall not stray beyond thy will; for I know that what thou appointest to me is best."

Is not this, my friends, the genuine language of the love of God? You know it is; but how different from this is the language and sentiment of dissatisfaction and discontent?—"Thy sovereignty, Lord, I must acknowledge; I dare not dispute thy title to dispose of me and my affairs. But how many things there are, that would be good for me,

which thou hast denied ! And how many things do I labour under, from which it would be kind in thee to deliver me without delay ! Thou hast enabled me to discern between the things that differ, and inclined me to prefer those that are most excellent ; give me then the powers that correspond with this ability, or, let thy power and providence be directed according to my wishes and desires.”—Is not this the natural language of discontent ? You do not think it too highly coloured ; you do not think I have done that character an injury ; but would it not be an injury to impute such sentiments to the love of God ?—Attend to the character of your Lord and Master, in whom the sentiments of love to his heavenly Father, though so lively and fervent, were not more sincere or more powerful, than his resignation to the will of God, and his complacency in the divine appointments. “The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?—Thy will, not mine be done !”—If such were the language of his soul in circumstances of the deepest distress, and acutest suffering, what then, Christians, ought to be yours ? Does it not follow, that since contentment with our condition is the natural effect of the sentiments and affections that we owe unto God, the author of our frame, and the disposer of our circumstances ; if, through the influence of any principle whatever, we become discontented with what we are and have, the love of God has not so much power over us, as that principle ? and if the principle from which our discontent proceeds, be the love of pleasure, then are we lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God ?

PRAYER.

DEEPLY sensible of the importance of thy favour, O thou Almighty and ever living God, we would be anxiously solicitous to keep ourselves at the greatest distance from any of those scenes, pursuits, or engagements which might alienate our affections from thee, or at all impair our diligence, zeal, and alacrity, in performing the work which thou hast given us to do! Warned by the gracious admonitions of thy holy word, may we flee from the wrath that is to come; and animated by the exceeding great and precious promises it contains, may it henceforth be our supreme solicitude to perfect holiness, in thy fear! In all piety to thee our God, in all charity to man, in the good government of our own hearts and minds, in purity, in patience, in meekness and humility, in contentment, and in all the graces and virtues that compose the Christian spirit, may we continue and abound still more and more.

In the day of our prosperity we will rejoice in thee, as the Author of all our comforts and our hopes—we will bless and praise thee with a pure heart fervently!—In the day of adversity, we will consider; we will humbly inquire what may be the intention of thy visitations towards us.—We will meditate on thy loving kindnesses which have been ever of old; we will call to mind our former deliverances; and though our hearts should be cast down, and our souls disquieted within us, still will we hope in God, assuredly trusting that we shall yet praise him, who is the health of our countenance and our God!

DISCOURSE XIII.

CHARACTERISTICKS OF THOSE, WHO ARE GOVERNED BY THE LOVE OF PLEASURE.

PART II.

II. EPIST. TO TIMOTHY, iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleasure, more than lovers of God.

IN order to assist the serious inquirer, really desirous of forming a just estimate of his own character, we endeavoured in a former Discourse to point out some of those marks or signatures of that love of pleasure which is inconsistent with the love of God : and we now proceed, in the first place, to a short examination of what are called the instrumental duties of religion, their nature and object ; and secondly to show, that if these are neglected for the sake of pleasure, another argument hence arises, that in us the love of pleasure is stronger than the love of God.

The instrumental duties of religion then are those, upon which the formalist, who is more concerned about the credit of his piety than the truth of it, lays the greatest stress ; and which he, who affects a superiour greatness and freedom of mind, exempt from vulgar prejudices and superstitions, is very apt to depreciate and despise.

They are those duties by which we may be improved in religious knowledge, by which the spirit and temper of real piety is assisted and promoted; by which we are confirmed in virtuous resolutions, encouraged to cultivate good affections, and excited to persevere and abound in all good works. A good heart and life, being the essentials of religion, the primary object of all religious dispensations;—of all religious ceremonies and institutions; for this reason, all those religious services and institutions, which contribute to this end, to sanctify the hearts and lives of men, are denominated instrumental duties. They are not duties of the highest order, and in whatever instances both cannot be discharged, instrumental duties must give way to those more important obligations to which they look as their object and end. However, though not duties of the highest order, they are duties notwithstanding; and the obligations to observe them remain in full force, whenever those that are superior do not exclusively require our attention.

But it is not merely for their tendency and influence that the obligation of these duties is derived: we are bound to observe them, it is true, because they tend to raise us to the perfection of our nature, and to promote the great end of our existence; but, though they had no such tendency that we could perceive, would any man affirm that we were at liberty, as we might choose, to worship God, or to neglect him; to converse with the word of God, or to reject it? and to attend on the institutions of religion, or to forsake them? Can the heart, which is as it ought to be, under the power of those good affections in which true holiness consists, can that heart neglect the institutions of religion, forget the word of God, or forbear the worship of its Maker?

A just attention to the instrumental duties of religion, is a natural and irrestrainable expression of real, genuine, and substantial godliness; nor are there any of its duties that are not, in their general nature at least, in themselves obligatory. As on the one hand, there is not an instance in the higher order of duties, but, while it is in the highest degree obligatory in itself, is at the same time also an instrumental duty in respect of others which must be combined with it to make a perfect human character; so, neither on the other hand, are there any instances among the duties of inferiour order, but, while they are instrumental in respect of other duties, are at the same time obligatory in themselves.—The love of God is a duty of the highest order, the obligations to which can never in any instance be superseded; and yet the love of God may with great propriety be considered as an instrumental duty, in respect to the love we owe to all his creatures; for, does not the love of the Father tend to excite, and cherish, and enliven, our affection to his children?

So again, the love of our neighbour, which is itself a duty of the highest order, the obligation to which cannot be dissolved, may it not also with very great propriety be considered as an instrumental duty, in respect to the love of God? for does not the love of his creation tend to enkindle our devout affections towards the Creator? The greater interest we have in the welfare of his subjects, will not our joy in his government, and our admiration of his character, be the greater? The higher our delight in the happiness which they enjoy, the more lively will be our affection unto him, from whom it comes. In like manner, of those that are distinguished as instrumental duties of religion, there is scarcely

one that is not obligatory in itself, abstracting from all consideration of its influence and of its tendencies: there is not one, but what is either the genuine result, and the natural concomitant of those good affections, in which true holiness consists; or is bound upon us by the express authority of God; or is a tribute of reverence and honour that would be due from us to him, even though, in respect either of our character or our happiness, we had no interest in paying it. They tend indeed to make us better men, but were it true, that in other respects we could arrive at the same degree of excellence, to which a just attention to these duties would promote us, yet, without a just attention to them, our characters would not be faultless and complete. Though praises and thanksgivings; though adorations, supplications, and confessions; though a frequent and reverent attention to the discoveries which God hath made unto us, of himself, his government, and purposes, had no efficacy in them to improve our hearts and minds; to form us to the divine likeness; to quicken us in all the duties of this present life, and to promote our meetness for the spiritual enjoyments of a better life to come; they would, notwithstanding, remain for ever, as long as our circumstances and relations are the same, a decent, reasonable, and indispensable acknowledgment of God's excellencies and mercies; and of our own guilt, weakness, and dependence.

If, then, the instrumental duties of religion have the authority of God, and, at the same time, their own innate reasonableness, as well as great utility, to recommend them, who would depreciate the instrumental duties of religion? The number to which they have been vainly multiplied; the foreign circumstances with which they have been

presumptuously combined ; the extravagance with which they have been magnified ; the unwarrantable confidence which the superstitious have been taught to place in them ; and the unreasonable expectations from them which they have been encouraged to entertain, have contributed, it may be, to sink them too low in the esteem of many, who, in other respects think more liberally, and upon the whole perhaps, more justly, of religion.

The name also by which they have been distinguished, may probably be another cause of the injustice that has been done them : they have been regarded as merely instrumental, as deriving all their value from the end to which they lead, and all their obligation from the obligation of that end ; and on these principles, in the endeavour to obtain for true religion a perfect triumph over superstition, they have been denied the honour which is justly their due, and degraded into the class of those things, which, abstracted from their connexions and influences, are in themselves of no real worth ; whereas in fact, as you have already seen, if, what are called the instrumental duties of religion, are in one view the means of holiness, they are, in another view, a part of true holiness itself.

But, suppose it were the fact, that the instrumental duties of religion were nothing more than the appropriate means of acquiring, maintaining, and improving, that temper and character in which God delighteth, and which he hath required of us as the condition of his friendship and acceptance ; admitting this, can the man whom pleasure calls away from the observance of them, be really governed by the love of God ?

or, if pleasure does not call him from them, yet if it be suffered to disqualify him for the acceptable and the profitable discharge of these duties, is that man governed by the love of God? If he love God he would desire to be like God, he would be solicitous to please him, he would seek his favour with his whole heart. Without holiness, no man can see God; without holiness, no man can be like God; without holiness, no man can please God; if he love God, who is glorious in holiness, he will love holiness itself; if he aspire after the divine favour, he will follow after holiness; and following after holiness, as his chief desire, and his highest interest, could he be tempted to neglect the means that must bring him thither? Anxious about the end, would he neglect the means? Would he be unsolicitous to employ the means of attaining to this excellence, or to employ them in such manner as should promise the most ample success? Whatever may be the cause of this neglect, is most evidently the object which he prefers to God. If pleasure be the cause, pleasure is that object; and the man, on whom pleasure can prevail, to neglect the instrumental duties of religion, is a lover of pleasure, more than a lover of God. If he be not satisfied with this evidence of so unacceptable a truth, it is probable that it will not be very long before he will have other evidences; for it is not likely, that the man who is at present guilty of neglecting the instrumental duties of religion, if he persevere in that neglect, will continue to persevere in those ways of wisdom to which they lead. The pleasures which have now sufficient power to persuade him to forsake the means, will, ere long, have sufficient power to render him indifferent about the end.

If you neglect the means of acquiring knowledge, no man expects that you will ever become wise; if

you neglect the means of acquiring wealth, no man expects that you will ever be rich: if, in this world of dangers, you neglect the means of preserving health, it cannot be hoped that you will preserve it long; neither can it be hoped, in this world of snares and temptations, that you will preserve your virtue long, if you neglect the instrumental duties of religion.—What think you of the inference that may reasonably be made from that neglect at present? how like you the prospect it affords, in respect to the time to come?

In the morning, when the good man is at his devotions, where are you? Surely you do not begin the day with sensuality or vanity; from morning until night you do not devote it unto pleasure. No, it begins at least, with business. With what business? with such as has the enlargement of your worldly pleasures for its object, and the hope and anticipation of that enlargement for the solace of its labours? If the day begin thus, how does it end? in unedifying company, in vain amusements, in licentious entertainments? or, if perchance your narrowness of fortune has debarred you from these pleasures, does it terminate in fretful, envious, and regretful thoughts about them? Are these the avocations that keep you from your devotions? or, if they have not absolutely this power, do they send you to your closets in a state of such dissipation, insensibility, and dulness, as to convert a scene, so capable of yielding you the sublimest enjoyments, and the most important benefits, into a tedious, irksome, and unprofitable ceremony? If it be so with you, what think ye of yourselves?—are ye Christians indeed, or in name only? imitators of Christ in reality, or merely in profession? lovers of God, or lovers of pleasure more?

While the good man, retired from the world, is conversing with those oracles of God that are able to make him wise unto salvation, with what are *you* conversing? what is it that employs your leisure? what is it that amuses your retirements? Is it the oracles of human folly? the oracles of modern licentiousness? Those vain and trifling productions of a vain and trifling age, whose best effect is to amuse the passing hour, but whose influence stops not there, since they seldom fail to suggest the most unjust ideas of human life, and of Divine Providence, and to awaken the most dangerous, if not the most criminal affections of the human heart; is it so with you? Are these the entertainments that, from day to day, are robbing your immortal spirits of the bread of life? the entertainments that keep the word of God out of your hand? the entertainments that concur with your secular employments to leave you no time to form your souls to the relish of spiritual enjoyments? What think ye of yourselves? are you as reasonable as you affect to be? as much Christians as you would be thought to be? are you lovers of God, or lovers of pleasure more?

Sometimes, it may be, you do retire from the world, and in that retirement, it may happen, that you have nothing to employ you more agreeably than your own thoughts. On what is it that they fix themselves? what is it that directs and governs them? do they ever glance upon your own character? if they do, do they ever dwell there? Are they guided by reason, or imagination? are they steered by any serious purpose of amendment or advantage, or merely committed to the gales of fancy for the present purpose of amusement, and turned adrift to go wherever inclination carries them? Are they employed in recalling, in anticipating, in

picturing some scene of external pleasure, or worldly entertainment? Are these the thoughts that preclude the study of your real characters from your attention, and hide you from the observation of your own minds? Are these the thoughts that engross the sacred moments which ought to be employed in communing with your hearts, in considering your ways, in rectifying what is amiss in them, and in confirming what is right? Is this the case with you? what think ye of yourselves? is the favour of God your supreme concern? is the likeness of God the chief object of your solicitude? are you lovers of God, or lovers of pleasure more?

You are not among the number of those who make the day of God a day of pleasure, who rest from the works of this world, for no other end, than to devote themselves to its amusements. When I look for you in this house of God, there are not many of you whom I am accustomed to find wanting here. But think, my friends, what are the dispositions with which you come hither? Do you come with your minds fatigued, or your thoughts dissipated, by your last night's pleasures and amusements? or with your hearts full of the entertainments you are to return to on the morrow? While you stand here as worshippers of God, are your hearts really worshipping some idol of worldly pleasure? While you sit here, as God's people sitteth, apparently attending to the dispensing of his word, are your thoughts roving into other scenes, and in quest of such entertainment as shall enable you to support the tedious hours that you spend here? When you go hence, do you reckon the duties of the day discharged, and instead of consecrating the remainder to reflection and devotion, do you give it unto pleasure? Do you come hither to atone, as

you imagine, for a custom with which you are not perfectly satisfied, and to which you could not otherwise reconcile your minds of postponing all thoughts of God on every other day, to every other object? Do you come hither not to be edified, but amused? Do you come hither with no higher wish than to be entertained for the time you spend here? If you find that you must indeed answer in the affirmative to any of these interrogatories, let me prevail with you, for once, to keep the answer of your consciences in view, and, when you go hence, to ask yourselves, in the retirements of this day, another question, viz. Are you really godly, or do you only wear the form of godliness? Are you lovers of God, or lovers of pleasure more?

My friends, you have much to do with God; yourselves and every thing in which you have any interest, are absolutely in his hands. You have far more important transactions with him than any that you are conscious of in this world; it will not be very long before the youngest of this audience will find it so. The time will come, I could tell the day beyond which it will not be deferred, but the day before which it will not come. I cannot tell; the time will come, when you will find this world vanishing away, and another opening upon you, this world of trial ending for ever unto you, and a sense of everlasting recompense commencing. You know as well as I do, would to God that you would let the idea sink deep into your hearts, that the round of this world's pleasures will not last for ever. The rose will fade, the eyes grow dim, and the heart grow faint, and all that is of this world become incapable of administering, even a momentary cordial or amusement. You know as well as I do, would

to God that you would let the thought take possession of your souls! that the time will come when the warmest appetites will be cold, when the acutest senses will be dull, when the liveliest fancy will be languid, when the giddiest sinner will be serious, and the drowsiest conscience awake. The time will come, of which your preachers have so often warned you, when your bodies shall be undistinguishable from the dust that flies before the wind, and when that dust shall have as much interest in the gayeties and sensualities of those upon whom it falls, as you! Long before that time arrives, the day may come upon you, when, on a dying bed, while you watch for the moment that is to stop that beating heart, you shall look back upon the life that you have spent, and forward into the eternity that is to receive you. In that awful season, whence will you derive your comfort? to whom will you apply yourselves—to pleasure, or to God? I have seen devotion triumph in the arms of death, but you need not wait until that awful period, to be perfectly persuaded, that pleasure cannot triumph there. It is not the remembrance, that you have loved pleasure more than God, that can give you confidence when you are entering into his presence: it is not this conviction that can comfort your attending friends: if you love them, if you love your own souls, let God have your first attentions, let your duty regulate your pleasures.

The considerations that have been addressed to you, are considerations by which you ought to be impressed—you think so yourselves. Some of you, perhaps, are impressed by them. Cherish the impression. No artifice has been employed to fix any false impression on you. It is the simple truth that

has been set before you, you will find it to have been such, ere long. Carry the ideas, carry the sentiments that have been suggested to you, into every scene of pleasure into which you go; that you may never at any time be affected by such scenes, otherwise than you ought to be affected; that your pleasures may never be of any other kind, or of any other measure, of repetition, or concurrence, than is innocent and laudable; but being perfectly consistent with the spirit of devotion, and with all that the Lord your God requires of you, while you live may be pursued without remorse or suspicion, and, when you die, reflected on without apprehension or regret.

PRAYER.

O LORD God Almighty—we would not dare to come into thy presence, or to cast ourselves at thy footstool, but in the exercise of reverence and godly fear. When we stand before our Maker, we would be clothed with humility, and sunk into the deepest sentiments of self abasement. Thine eye penetrates into the inmost recesses of the soul, thou searchest the heart, and triest the reins of thy worshippers, even the heavens are not clean in thy sight, and thou chargest thine Angels with folly. What then is man, that thou shouldst be mindful of him, or what the son of man, that he should hope for thine acceptance of his services? We do not hope, by any services of ours, however serious, devout, or faithful, to add any thing unto thee, for thou, O Lord, art infinitely exalted above all adoration, blessing, and praise! Our desire and hope is, that by these means we may attain to thy likeness and thy favour; and, that, by our attendance on the

ordinances of thine earthly courts, we may be qualified for the services of that nobler temple into which nothing enters that defiles! This thou hast encouraged us to expect from our devout approaches to thee, and aspiring after these blessings, which we esteem as our highest privilege, we thank thee that it is permitted us to pour out our hearts before thee.

May no allurements of this world ever tempt us to forsake or to neglect the assembling of ourselves together in acts of religious worship; and may it be ever our sincere desire and steady resolution to bring forth fruits meet unto repentance; meet for the invaluable privileges which in the gospel we enjoy; and do thou, O God, strengthen us with strength in our souls, prosper our endeavours to walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well pleasing, and to stand in all thy statutes and thine ordinances blameless.

DISCOURSE XIV.

ON THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST, AFTER HIS
RESURRECTION, TO MARY MAGDALENE.

PART I.

JOHN xx. 11.....17.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, 12. And seeth two Angels in white, sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain: 13. And they said unto her, why weepest thou? She said unto them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. 14. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15. Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to have been the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16. Jesus said unto her, Mary! She turned herself and said unto him, Rabboni! Which is to say, Master.

THESE words we find in the history of Christ's resurrection. However marvellous that event was in itself, yet the circumstances in which it is described are so natural and probable, and the narration of it so plain and simple, that these things will avail more to procure it the attention and the belief of every reasonable mind, than a thousand artificial difficulties or sophistical objections to undermine

its credibility. As this part of the history is not the least beautiful, and as it appears neither barren of serious reflection, nor incapable of moral application, I have chosen it for the subject of these Discourses. Let us, therefore, review it more particularly, opening the ideas, and intermingling such observations, as may tend at the same time to fix and enliven our conceptions of the fact; to illustrate the sense and sentiments of the passage, or to point out the uses to which it may be applied.

Two days had now passed since those pious women, who followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, had attended the mournful scene of his crucifixion, and had left the body of their Lord in the Arimathean's tomb. The sabbath interrupted those testimonies of respect, which they owed to the remains of a friend so highly honoured, and so much beloved. When the sabbath was elapsed, and it was now lawful for them to proceed in their preparations to embalm the body, early in the following morning, Mary Magdalene, with the other women, repaired to the Sepulchre. They saw the stone taken away from the door of the sepulchre, and they found that the body was not there. Perplexed at this discovery, Mary, returning to Peter and John, they hastened with her to the Sepulchre. After they had satisfied themselves of the truth of her report, they believed the fact to be as she had said, that the body was conveyed to some other place. They thought it, probably, a vain attempt to make any further search, and, disconsolate and afflicted, returned to their own homes.

Mary's zeal, however, could not so rest satisfied. Pondering in her heart, what accident could have happened to her Lord, Mary stood weeping by the

tomb. Distracted amidst a thousand perplexing thoughts, her imagination was unable to fix itself on any. She began, perhaps, to question whether her senses might not have misinformed her; she hoped, she wished, she was almost ready to believe, that her Lord might still be there. Her tears were yet flowing, and her heart unsettled, when, to satisfy herself, she looked once more into the Sepulchre. She found not indeed her Lord, but she saw there those celestial Spirits that had ministered unto him. Jesus had risen from the grave, according to his prediction.

His disciples seem not to have had the least expectation of an event like this, and bewildered by their wrong conceptions concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, they were unprepared to receive the intelligence. These celestial spirits therefore remained here, to receive the visit which the women meant unto their Lord, to explain to them how it came to pass that their Master was not there, to procure a serious regard to his resurrection by the impressive solemnity of this testimony, and to suggest to their minds, or to recall to their remembrance, such considerations as might confirm their faith in it, and, through their report, facilitate the assent of their brethren.

These observations are justified by the discourse that passed between the angels and the women, during Mary's absence, whilst she was returning to the city to inform the disciples that the Sepulchre had been opened, and that the body had been conveyed away.

By whatever means, or for whatever reasons these illustrious Ministers had been unobserved by

Peter and John, they concealed not themselves from so disconsolate a mourner as Mary. Had she looked again into the tomb, and seen nothing there but the grave clothes of her Lord, when afterwards she was suddenly addressed by him, her surprize perhaps might have overpowered her, or her doubt and despair might have been so confirmed, that she would have been incapable of giving credit to her senses, and would have treated the salutation of her Master as a vain apparition, the illusive creature of her own imagination. These courteous strangers therefore, kindly revealed themselves to her, they seemed to take a friendly part in her distress, and compassionately asked her, Woman, why weep-est thou? Because, said she, in the fulness of her heart, in all the artless simplicity of sorrow, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him

Did Mary imagine, that the Arimathean had prevented her in those last sad testimonies of regard, that she meant to her deceased Lord? Did she fancy that he had already done the last kind offices to the lifeless body, and conveyed it to some other mansion in the house of death, where it might for ever lodge, forgotten and undisturbed? Or, is it more probable that she painted to herself, that precious corpse, consecrated as it was by the pure, the good, the pious spirit, by which it had so lately been animated, exposed to the malicious insults of insatiable persecutors? or abandoned in some unfrequented solitude, neglected and unknown? Whatever were the particular conceptions which dictated these words, it is plain that they were exceedingly distressful; for, no sooner had she mentioned the cause of her affliction than she turned herself, it might be, to con-

ceal the excess of her grief. Jesus was behind her, but she knew not that it was he. Blinded by her tears, or overwhelmed by her sorrow, she at first knew not either his appearance or his voice. She took him for the keeper of the garden; she thought no one needed to ask her why she wept, or whom she sought; tell me, Sir, said she, if thou hast borne him hence, where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.* Christ, not untouched with the feeling of her infirmities, is no longer able to sustain the trial of her affection. He saw her anguish, and said to her, in a voice that carried deep conviction and comfort to her heart, "Mary!"—"Look at me Mary, dost thou not know thy Lord? I see the sincerity and zeal of thy affection, and thou, Mary, hast the honour of being the first eye-witness, that he who was dead is alive again, and lives for evermore!"

It has generally been supposed, but it is undoubtedly an error, that the Mary who wept at the tomb of Jesus, was the once licentious Mary who had shed tears of penitence on his feet.† Mary Magdalene, on the contrary, as appears from the scripture ac-

* There is a singular beauty in this abrupt address of Mary.—She enters into no explanation respecting the person she sought. So entirely was her mind absorbed by one great overwhelming idea—by the excess of her grief and the destruction of all her hopes, that she could not conceive the possibility of any one mistaking the cause. A very striking proof surely, among innumerable others, of the perfect authenticity of the narrative.—EDITOR.

† The learned and excellent Dr. Lardner addressed a pamphlet in the year 1753 to the benevolent Mr. Hanway, who, however worthy, was not a Scripture Critick. on the impropriety in the thing itself, as well as on the injustice done to the memory of this excellent person by his intention of calling the house to be erected, for the reception of penitent prostitutes, "a Magdalene House." In this pamphlet the subject is thoroughly examined, and it is proved beyond the possibility of a doubt, that Mary Magdalene is always mentioned by the sacred writers with the greatest respect. After a very minute and accurate

count of her, was a woman of respectable character, and of distinguished rank, and a principal supporter of Christ in his travels. We are expressly told, however, that she had been a demoniack, that is, a lunatick, and that she had been healed by the hand of Jesus.

What was her gratitude we have seen, so fervent, and lively, that it scarcely can, although in reason it surely ought, to be exceeded by theirs, in whom his gospel has healed the deadlier maladies of the mind. Abstracted from the consideration of the particular obligation which she owed to Jesus, Mary's attachment to him appears in every view of it, respectable and amiable:—let us ask ourselves, would such sentiments of love and veneration add less grace to our characters? Would they be less amiable and respectable in us? Let the answer of our consciences determine our conduct.

I would now suggest a few thoughts on the causes, and therefore on the reasonableness of Mary's joy in the discovery that was made to her, that her Lord was risen from the dead.

1st. The resurrection of Christ was a subject of rejoicing to her, because it was the restoration of a

examination of the subject, Dr. Lardner proceeds as follows; "Let us now sum up the evidence. Mary of Magdala was a woman of distinction, and very easy in her worldly circumstances. For a while she had laboured under some bodily indisposition, which our Lord miraculously healed. For which benefit she was ever after very thankful. So far as we know, her conduct was always regular, and free from censure. And we may reasonably believe, that after her acquaintance with our Saviour, it was edifying and exemplary. I conceive of her as a woman of fine understanding, and known virtue, and discretion, with a dignity of behaviour becoming her age, her wisdom, and her high station." EDITOR.

most respectable and amiable friend, highly honoured and affectionately beloved by her. In Mary's mind, the light of reason had been obscured, perhaps nearly extinguished. As he went about doing good, Jesus met this unhappy maniac. She was a proper subject on whom to exert the miraculous power, which, in confirmation of his mission from on high, he was enabled to exercise: he saw, pitied, and healed her. Her heart was not ungrateful; she knew the value of the gift of reason; she was not insensible to the deplorable situation of those, in whom it is enfeebled or bewildered: she felt her obligations to God the gracious author, and to Christ, the kind and compassionate instrument of her deliverance.

From the sacred history it appears that she had no occupation, and no family to attach her to any special residence; that her years had already given her a title to respect, and that her circumstances were not only easy, but even affluent. Very naturally therefore, very innocently, and very laudably, and without the infringement or neglect of any social duty, from the moment of her recovery, she seems to have devoted herself to a faithful attendance upon him, to whom she owed the resurrection of her intellectual and moral life. Thus, as he travelled from city to city, in execution of the high commission which God had given him, to bear witness of the truth, she lost no opportunity of hearing the lessons which he had enabled her to understand, or of administering to his support and comfort as his circumstances might require. In this frequent intercourse, what an infinite variety of events must have been daily multiplying the evidences of his divine authority! what discoveries of his transcendent excellence to magnify her respect, and to increase her veneration for Jesus! Thus knowing him, and thus obliged to him, what

must have been the feelings of her heart when she heard that he was condemned; when she saw him crucified; when she attended his entombment; when she came to embalm his body, and found it removed, whither, and by whom, she knew not!

Have you ever seen the wise, the good, the friendly, those to whose councils and beneficence you had owed substantial and numerous obligations; to whom you had long been united in the bonds of sincere, affectionate, and respectful friendship; have you ever seen them, have you ever bid adieu to them, as you saw them lying on the very margin of the grave?—When you had given them your last kind wishes, and your last lingering look, have you suddenly been called back, to receive them as it were, alive from the dead? What your hearts, at that moment, conceived and dictated, may help you to form some faint ideas of the pious joy that agitated the heart of Mary? yet, though from the grave itself you had literally received such a friend, unless your obligations had been equal to her obligations, and your friend equal unto her friend, your sentiments, however alike in kind, could not, in degree, have been equal unto hers.

2d. The resurrection of Christ was a subject of rejoicing unto Mary, in as much as it was to her, and not to her only, but to the whole world, the restoration of a wise, a kind, and faithful instructor.

Mary knew how to value such a blessing. The times in which she lived, rendered such a blessing particularly valuable. The Scribes, “taught not with authority;” the Pharisees “said, and did not;” they “bound heavy burdens” on their disciples; their characters corresponded not with their requisitions.

They knew little of the religion of reason ; they understood not their own scriptures ; they inculcated “ for divine commandments, the traditions of men.” In the lessons of such teachers, Mary must often have regretted the want of light and energy ; and how happy must she have thought herself, how ardently must she have rejoiced, for the sake of others, as well as on her own account, that in Jesus she had found a religious teacher, concerning whom it was strictly true, what the officers and the chief priests had affirmed, that never “ manspake like this man.” To see this light of the world extinguished ; the improvement which her own character and comfort might have derived from his services, for ever at an end ; all the hopes which from his ministry she had formed in behalf of truth and virtue, and of every human interest extinct for ever : crucified by the world which he loved, which he blest, which he enlightened, which he prayed for, which he guided by his example, as well as by his counsels ; what hope, what interest was buried,—in Mary’s view for ever buried, in the tomb of Jesus ! Break up that tomb, set the captive free, give him back again unto the world, and how joyful is the revolution ! The clouds that hung upon the sepulchre of Joseph were dark indeed and lowering, but the darker they were, so much brighter was the scene which the morning of the third day opened, and the livelier the joys that it enkindled within Mary’s heart.—That day, by anticipation, renewed to her the edification and the comfort, which heretofore she had so often experienced, in attending on the discourses of her Lord. That day gave renewed life to the hopes, which the crucifixion of Christ had extinguished, that this friend of hers, would also, in respect of all their most important interests, be a great and lasting benefit to the whole human race.

What a transport ! how just the ground on which it stood ! how reasonable any elevation to which it might have risen, that this light of the world, the wisest counsellor, the best informed, and best authenticated instructor ; the safest, most amiable, and most animating Exemplar of mankind, having lost his life, unjustly, by the hands of wicked men, should have regained it speedily by the power of God, and have returned (as in Mary's apprehension at the moment assuredly he had returned) to renewed intercourse with the world, to bless them probably for a long, certainly for an indefinite season, with his preaching and example.—To a mind which had been taught by Jesus the value of a life to come ; to a heart, which had learnt from him, to take a cordial interest in the welfare of all his brethren ; what joy to hail his return from the realms where death had confined him, to give incontrovertible evidence, that death is not the end of man, and that the way of duty is likewise the way to make even death a blessing ?

If our hearts are impressed as they ought to be, we shall sympathize with Mary's joy on this occasion ; and although we know, what she did not at first know, that the resurrection of Christ from the dead was not designed to prolong his residence in this world, yet shall we rejoice and give thanks, that his renewed life, though for no long continuance on earth, was the means of qualifying his disciples for the ministry to which they were appointed, and (considering the consequences of that qualification) the means also of protracting the benefits of his ministry to this, and through this, to the latest generations.—If then, in Mary's friendship we see any thing respectable and amiable ; and, however dark the intervening scenes,

any thing in its final issue, desirable and happy, let us take care that our friendships be only with the wise and good.

Again, if in the interest which Mary took in the information and good conduct of mankind there appears to be any thing respectable and amiable, we must of course believe that herein she is not unworthy of our imitation. It is easy to rejoice in the good instructions that are given to the world, and in the good examples that are set before it; but this will not discharge our duty: So far as God hath qualified us for it, such instructions must be given in our own persons to those who want and will receive them, and such examples must be exhibited to all men, in our own temper, and in our own lives.

PRAYER.

HAPPY are our eyes for they see, and happy are our ears for they hear, what Kings and Prophets desired to see, yet saw not, and to hear, yet did not hear them! We rejoice in God, that he, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake unto the Fathers in times past by the Prophets, hath spoken unto us in latter days by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things, and placed at the right hand of the Majesty on high. If the word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness with signs, and won-

ders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Spirit.

O righteous Father, let it not be our condemnation that light is come into the world, but that we have loved darkness rather than light because our deeds are evil. May our faith be a lively operative principle, purifying our hearts, working by love, and enabling us so to overcome this present world, that finally we may be presented faultless before the presence of thy glory with exceeding joy !

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE XV.

ON THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST, AFTER HIS
RESURRECTION, TO MARY MAGDALENE.

PART II.

JOHN XX. 11.....17.

But Mary stood without at the Sepulchre weeping, &c.

IN the progress of our Discourse concerning the causes of joy in the resurrection of our Lord, that might naturally present themselves to the mind of Mary, we come now to observe in

The third place, That the resurrection of Christ was not only the restoration of a most respectable and amiable friend, highly honoured and affectionately beloved by her; the restoration also of a wise, a kind, and faithful instructor; but the discovery of this resurrection was itself a favour to Mary, and accompanied with such circumstances as were extremely friendly, and very honourable to her.

To a mourner such as Mary, it had been a great privilege, if, from some just conceptions of what her Lord had taught, if from any thing contained in the Jewish Scriptures or conveyed to her

through credible tradition, or deduced from the observations, sentiments, and reasonings of her own mind. she had been enabled to establish herself in the firm persuasion that a friend whom she so highly respected, and to whom she was so much obliged, having finished his course of duty, had obtained his recompense of reward. It would have been a great privilege, if by any means, Providence had enabled her to think so well of the condition after death, of those who were gone before her, as to anticipate the renovation of her virtuous friendships with her virtuous predecessors, when her own course should have been run. This conviction had been an unspeakable blessing, and to have arrived at it must have filled her heart with joy and gladness. But, to have seen her risen Lord, to have conversed with him, if but for a few days, for a few hours, for a few moments; to have heard the voice of Jesus, when he had triumphed over death, though it had been in the tone of gentle reproof, accompanied by the same air of countenance with which he said to Thomas, "be not faithless but believing:" though Mary had heard nothing from her Lord but the language of rebuke, that she had been seeking for the living among the dead, that she had not believed his repeated predictions concerning his resurrection, or had not understood what the rising from the dead should mean; yet, as in the case of Thomas even such language of rebuke must have wrought conviction, that conviction alone would have enkindled gratitude and joy. But what greater gratitude, what livelier joy, what a variety and multitude of pleasurable sentiments, that gentle air, that kind and penetrating tone of former friendship, which, while it showed that he was himself alive again, showed that his friendship also was living still; and instantly called up in Mary's mind

the meekness and wisdom, as well as the authority with which he taught; the energy, as well as kindness of his beneficence, and the obligations that she owed to him as her instructor and deliverer.*

At the sight of that well known countenance, at the sound of that well known voice, what a multitude of pleasing recollections must have rushed into her mind!—His looks upon the cross, how full of pain and anguish; in Joseph's tomb, how pale and ghastly; now, what life, what ease, what sweetness, what dignity is there in them!—How piercing were the accents in which he cried "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—Now, how soothing, how cheerful, how reviving is his voice!—How much like himself is this Son of God!—Immortal now, yet still meek, and lowly, kind, and condescending, as he ever was!—It is his own air, and manner, and expression; it is that heavenly teacher, whose wisdom and whose character I have so much admired and revered; and on whose counsels and instructions I have so often hung with unspeakable satisfaction and delight! It is that amiable friend, I know him well, I remember the transporting moment, the gracious countenance, and the powerful voice, when he composed my distracted mind, and restored me to myself."

* From many circumstances in her history incidentally related, it appears that Mary possessed a mind generous, enlightened, and disinterested; far superiour to that servile poverty of spirit which implicitly follows the multitude, and which instigated the anxious inquiry, "Have any of the Pharisees and Rulers believed on him?" She saw the transcendent excellence of her Lord through the guise of extreme poverty, and the imposing shadow of contumely and reproach. She saw, and in company with her other female associates, bore her noble testimony, during the agonizing journey to Golgotha, at the foot of the cross—and even when all hope was destroyed, at the tomb wherein his body was laid!—EDITOR.

It is very natural that ideas, such as these, should crowd into the mind of Mary, to confirm her faith, and to elevate her joy ; not clothed indeed in words, as in order to exhibit them to you it was now necessary they should be exhibited, perhaps, not even formed into orderly and distinct conceptions ; but, whatever pleasing sentiments were connected in her heart with the appearance and the voice of Jesus, they would instantly, at the same moment, as by the touch of lightning, be rekindled there ; and, if one can at all enter into her feelings, or conceive the effect of the situation upon her mind, they must have been sentiments, which, if the time would have admitted, and the agitation of her mind allowed, would have vented themselves in some such language as that in which they have been now represented.

The sentiments, however, that have been here ascribed to Mary, should not be considered merely as matter of conjecture, for, if the history be attended to, we must be inclined to believe, that in fact she was thus affected, and that such affections and such feelings were at this time really existing in her mind. Her reply to Jesus, discovering himself to her, was *Rabboni*, which, says the Evangelist, is to say, *Master !* Our version has not given precisely and unambiguously the import of the Evangelist's interpretation ; for the term he uses, signifies *Teacher* ; and those who are versed in such literature well know, that the term itself, together with that by which the Evangelist explains it, strictly and literally signifies, *My great Instructor*. She does not signify her recognition of Jesus, as in ordinary circumstances would have been most natural, by the simple enunciation of his name ; she does not merely cry out, *My Lord* : that appellation, though ex-

pressive of respect, and of some relation that she bore to him, was too vague and general a term to suit the vigour of her impressions; too feeble and inadequate to satisfy the fulness of her mind. It was in his office of a Divine Instructor, that she had been used to attend upon and contemplate him; it was in this relation that she found those features that had continually cherished and improved her esteem, and which had justified and confirmed her attachment. This, therefore, was the compellation which her mind instantly suggested—‘Great Teacher,’ was her language, ‘with whom no other teacher, however eminent and excellent, ought ever to be compared.’ The very terms then in which she recognized Jesus, in my apprehension, make it perfectly clear, that, on the moment of his discovering himself to her, a multitude of pleasing recollections, like those we have endeavoured to describe, did actually rush into her mind, not merely to confirm the conviction of her senses, but to fill her mind with “all peace, and joy in believing.”

Again, the kindness of this discovery to Mary, did not alone consist in the irresistible evidence which it afforded of her Master’s resurrection; for, the moment that her mind recovered from its first agitation, and was at leisure to reflect upon the steps by which she had arrived at complete conviction, her gratitude and joy must have received new accessions from the tender caution with which so transporting a discovery was made to her;—that it was not sudden, abrupt, and hasty, but, as far as was needful, progressive, gradual, and with preparation.

When, from the Sepulchre, where she had been weeping, Mary turned herself from the Angel;

Jesus showed himself to her, but so circumstanced, that she should not recollect him. Considering the nature of Mary's errour, who took the person by whom she was addressed, for the gardener, and comparing this first address with the manner in which Jesus always addressed his mother, and with that subsequent address, in which he perfectly discovered himself, it may seem, perhaps, that he was concealed from her, as by other circumstances, so, in part at least, by something unusually distant and respectful in the manner of his accosting her. "Woman," said he, "why weepest thou?" These words, though they did not discover the speaker, prepared for the discovery. Mary, believing him to be the gardener, and suspecting he had taken away the body from the Sepulchre, would naturally fix her eyes upon his countenance, and whilst she attentively looked at him, must she not have traced there the features of her Lord? Despairing indeed as her state of mind then was, and still incredulous about his resurrection, it would not be the idea of identity or sameness, but of similitude only, that would first strike her. When, from perceiving in the person, to whom she was speaking, some resemblance of her Lord, she was beginning to suspect that it might be himself; Jesus kindly converted that suspicion into certainty, and spake to her in a manner that left no doubt upon her mind, that it was indeed her Deliverer, her Instructor, and her Friend. The instant transition from a state of mind, totally occupied and deeply impressed with the idea that her Lord was irrecoverably dead, to a state of indubitable persuasion that he was certainly alive again, might have been a change too great to have been supported. The abrupt and instantaneous discovery of himself, might have overpowered a very tender heart, and a very feeble frame. In Mary's case, the agitation occasioned by

so violent an impression, might have renewed the derangement of her ideas, and brought back a total alienation of mind. To Mary then, how striking and engaging must this tenderness have been, and when once she had become capable of reflecting upon it, what an improvement of her joy in the conviction, that her Lord was risen from the dead!

But this is not all; the discovery was not only thus kind to Mary, kind in itself, in its nature, in its manner, and in its circumstances—in other respects also it was singularly kind, and highly honourable. Mary and her associates forsook not their dying Lord. They staid by the cross, till the tragedy was over. They were the last to leave the Sepulchre at his entombment, they were the first to revisit it when the sabbath was ended, and “when therefore Jesus was risen,” says St. Mark, “he appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” The firmness of her faith, the boldness of her avowal of it, the steadiness of her attachment, the zeal of her affection, the importance and disinterestedness of her services, all of them the result of that power which had been exerted to restore her from the most deplorable condition of insanity, and her gratitude for this kind exertion of that power, merited, as it seems, this honourable distinction. Could Mary perceive that she was thus distinguished, and not rejoice in it? could Mary receive from Jesus the message which he sent by her to his Apostles, and not know that none of them had yet seen him alive after his passion?

To whom is it that we first communicate our good tidings of great joy? is it not to those whom we respect and love? In making the first discovery of himself to Mary, what a testimony did Jesus bear

to Mary's merit, and to his own sense of it ! I would ask again, To whom is it that we first communicate good tidings, is it not to those of whom we are persuaded, that they love and respect us ? is it not to those who will turn the joyful tidings we communicate, to the best account for all who have any interest in them ? What a testimony did Jesus herein bear to the benignity and liberality of Mary's sentiments, and to her delight in every good word and work ! Who, and what are they, whom we employ in kind and honourable errands, but those of whom we are persuaded that they will execute them without envy, and will not themselves be envied, for the distinction that has been conferred upon them by those to whom they are sent ?

How honourable then was the commission with which she was entrusted to Mary's candour, and to Mary's sympathy, as well as to the candour and sympathy of the Apostles ? how honourable is this testimony on the one hand to the equity of their sentiments, and on the other, to the respectability of her character and her title to the estimation in which they held her ?

When Isaiah, foretelling the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, describes the watchmen, discovering from their watch-towers afar off upon the mountains, the messenger that was bringing from Assyria the glad tidings of salvation, he represents the watchmen as admiring and almost envying the messenger, and the messenger, as exulting in the errand upon which he comes.

How beautiful, say they, upon the mountains,
Are the feet of that joyful messenger, of him that announceth peace,
Of that joyful messenger of good tidings, of him that announceth salvation,
And that sayeth unto Sion, thy God reigneth !

You feel, I am persuaded, how natural are the sentiments of the watchmen and the messenger, how closely connected with, and how perfectly suitable to their situation. Had you descried a messenger bringing the good tidings of the deliverance of your captive countrymen, you would have admired and rejoiced in his alacrity; and if yourselves had been entrusted with the message, the like exultation and alacrity would have distinguished you. But what had that messenger to announce that can be compared with the joyful tidings that Mary had to reveal? Is the restoration of the remains of a captive nation, to be compared with the pledge of human immortality? Is the deliverance of one people out of the hands of their enemies, to be compared with the demonstration of all men's triumph over death? Of which good news would you rather have been the messenger? In which of these felicities would you have preferred to take your share?

To convey to friends the joyful tidings of the resurrection of a common friend, what heart would not spring forward to so delightful, so acceptable a service?—To carry such tidings to disappointed, disconsolate, and despairing friends, what zeal and alacrity must not this have added to the embassy?—But, if the message involved in it also, glad tidings of great joy to all people, what tongue can express the exultation to which it must have given rise?—To a generous mind the errand must have been as delightful, as it was important; and the employment, in itself a subject of the purest joy, must have formed a great and unspeakable obligation to the Employer.—It was a testimony of respect, it was an act of kindness, it was an occasion given to excite, to exercise, and to improve, both in herself and others, the sweetest and most ennobling affec-

tions of the human heart. What a subject this, of thankfulness and joy! great enough, as it seems to me, to have been felt sensibly, even amidst all those other lively sentiments, that the conviction of her Master's resurrection must have enkindled in her heart.

But this is not all the grace and honour which this discovery of himself, and the circumstances of this discovery to Mary, comprehends in it; for it remains still to be added, that these favours and these honours were conferred upon her, in the presence of many friends and associates whom she esteemed and loved, and by whom she was reciprocally respected.

It appears to be a fact, clearly deducible from an attentive consideration of the various narratives of the four Evangelists, that when Jesus revealed himself to her, Mary was not alone. She was attended to the sepulchre, in her way thither, and from it also, by those honourable women, who, in his last journey, as well as formerly, had accompanied our Lord from Galilee to Jerusalem; who had been present at his crucifixion and his burial, and had carefully observed, where, and how the body was entombed.

It is probable that there subsisted among these pious followers of their Master, many tender ties of friendship and attachment. In their daily intercourse, many mutual kindnesses must have been perpetually circulating among them, by which means they would be formed to the readiest sympathy with the pains and pleasures of each other; and, in the presence of their Lord at least, would have enjoyed much edifying conversation. But, besides

all these, and many other causes of esteem and affection, they were "all one in Christ:" their attachment to their common Lord, cemented more closely their attachment to each other, and the respect he showed to all, rendered them all reciprocally more respectable.

To be distinguished by such a personage, in the presence of such friends, so affectionately beloved, and so amiable; so respectfully esteemed, and so respectable; was no trifling distinction, no ordinary favour, no common honour: I was going to have said, the language of it was, "many daughters have done virtuously, yet thou hast excelled them all," but I feel myself something checked in that idea, yet not altogether precluded from such an interpretation of the text, by the consideration, that they were partakers, as well as witnesses, of the favours that were conferred on Mary.

From John it appears indeed, that Mary was particularly addressed, but from Matthew it is as manifest that the whole company also were addressed by him. In revealing himself to Mary therefore, Jesus revealed himself to all who were within hearing of the conversation, and in the errand that was particularly prescribed to her, it was signified to all that they were to accompany her. To have had the favour she received, conferred, though not in the presence of those she esteemed and loved, had been just matter of rejoicing: to have received distinction in their sight, in which they could in no degree have participated, might, no doubt, have been matter of rejoicing still: but to a heart of generous sensibility, this would have been a diminished favour. Surely it must have improved her joy and gratitude, that, though on this

occasion distinguished, she was not greatly nor invidiously distinguished, and that the honour done in particular to herself, was a very small account in comparison of that by which all her associates were equally distinguished.

To be singularly distinguished in an honourable society where all deserve distinction, while, in one view it is an honour of the highest kind, in another, is far less acceptable, far less desirable, and far less joyful, than to stand as near, as is consistent with any sort of distinction, on a level with those whom we feel to be as worthy of our esteem, as we can conceive ourselves to be of theirs. To be the principal, and only just the principal, on such an occasion, and in such an embassy, was a far more acceptable distinction than to have engrossed the honour of it wholly, or to have stood very high above those who were admitted to some participation of the honour. How beautifully does this consideration display the wisdom, the delicacy, and the benignity of Jesus! While at the same time, giving greater purity to Mary's exultation, and therefore more approveableness to her own feelings, and adding also a more perfect sympathy with more perfect pleasure in the breasts of her associates and friends, what an elevation must it have given to her triumphs, what livelier emotions under the recent impressions of the scene, and how much more heartfelt and more permanent satisfaction in her subsequent reflections on them!

From what has been suggested in this and the foregoing Discourse, it is obvious to remark,

In the first place. That it is not a formal, careless, or cursory perusal of the sacred history, that

can discover to us all its beauties, or let in its just impressions to our hearts. This can be attained only by attentive meditation, and reiterated reflection on the scenes and circumstances of the events, and on the feelings and language of the agents. Without this, many of the beauties of the sacred story will lie hidden from us, and therefore, many things that might have confirmed our faith, and through that, our virtue, as well as many things that might have exercised the good affections of our hearts, will remain undiscovered.

Secondly. To reflect upon Mary's faith may contribute to confirm and enliven ours. We believe that death is not the end of man, and it is well that we believe it, it is well for ourselves, and for all who live with us; it is for their comfort, and for our comfort; and though it be greatly for our interest, it is nevertheless for the credit of our understandings also, that we believe it. Reason intimates this truth, Christianity asserts it, and in Christ, shown alive after his passion, we have an argument from fact, a specimen of human fates. As it is for the credit of our understandings, for the support of our minds under affliction, and the melioration of our character at all times, that we should receive this joyful doctrine, it is of the first importance that our faith in it should never decline or waver. It is our prudence therefore, and our duty also, often to renew the ground on which our faith is supported, and to avail ourselves of every fact, and of every consideration, to establish and enliven it.

Of this nature, if I mistake not, we shall find the conviction that was produced in the mind of Mary. It was not a conviction that she expected; it was not a conviction for which she had prepared her-

self; it was not a conviction for which the previous circumstances had disposed her mind; her prejudices were all on the other side; her feelings were the most unfavourable, and the very entrance of any such idea into her mind was powerfully precluded. She had been seeking for the body in the sepulchre, she was perplexed that it was not to be found there; she had prepared wherewith to perform the last sad offices of respect to a deceased friend, and she conceived that some one had anticipated her in these services, or had put it beyond her power to perform them, and she was weeping, in all the anguish of disappointment. She did not recollect Jesus when she saw him; she did not recollect him, even when he spoke to her: how powerful then must have been the impression, how irresistible the evidence, to overcome all this indisposition to receive it; to convert such darkness into light; such incredulity, into firm and lively faith; and such despondent melancholy, into joy and triumph!

How firm is the testimony of such a witness? With how much comfort and satisfaction may we rely upon it! In her conviction surely, there is power enough to compose any doubts of ours, and to engage us to rejoice in her report, as “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.”

PRAYER.

BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of his abundant mercy by the resurrection of his Son from the dead, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope of an inheritance

incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us!

Enable us, O merciful Father, so to walk, as he also walked. Being risen with Christ, may we set our affections not on things below, but on things above. While we are in the world, may we be the lights of the world; may we live an ornament to the reasonable nature, and a credit to that holy name by which we are called. And whenever thou shalt see good to remove us from the present scene, may it appear to all, by our patience and submission, by our tranquillity and composure, by our readiness to go hence and to be with Christ, that true religion can impart consolation, above the reach of time, and chance, and death.

Finally, O God, having approved ourselves through all the changes of this world thy faithful servants and obedient children, in the next may we be received into those blissful mansions, whither Christ as our forerunner is already entered; and where all the wise and worthy, of all ages and generations, of all nations, tongues, and kindreds, shall be for ever settled in thy heavenly presence! Amen.

DISCOURSE XVI.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TOMB OF JESUS, AS TENDING TO CONFIRM OUR FAITH IN THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

MATTHEW xxviii. 6.

Come and see the place where the Lord lay.

To the serious and well instructed Christian the tomb of Jesus is a very interesting and edifying theme of contemplation; and if the Infidel would attend the place where Jesus lay, such considerations could not fail to suggest themselves even to him, as might create a doubt at least, concerning the reasonableness of his unbelief.

The words of the text were spoken by an angel who attended the sepulchre of Jesus, to the women who came thither early in the morning after the sabbath, to complete the embalming, which, on account of its approach, had been left unfinished. The women were amazed to find the sepulchre unsealed; they were perplexed when they found not the body; they dreamt not of a resurrection, for as yet they understood not the scriptures, which said that Jesus must rise from the dead.

In the following Discourses, we shall not confine ourselves to those objects merely, to which the ce-

lestial messenger particularly invited the attention of the persons he addressed, but taking a wider scope, shall divide the meditations, that present themselves, into two different classes, comprising under the first, such as have a tendency to confirm our faith in the christian doctrine ; and under the second, such as have a tendency to awaken or enliven those good affections that constitute and adorn the Christian temper.

Under the first head let us inquire, what were the peculiar circumstances in the place where Jesus lay, to confirm our faith in him and in his gospel ; and here it may be useful to consider,

Where the sepulchre was situated ;

Of what materials it was composed ;

To whom it belonged ; and

What was deposited within it ?

Each of these considerations will suggest some reflections of powerful efficacy to confirm our faith in Christ, either by justifying our dependence upon the writers of his life, and the credit that we attach to the history of his resurrection ; or, by displaying to us a part of that minute and wonderful attention, with which the providence of God disposed the various circumstances of his death, so as to produce complete conviction, that “ the Lord is risen indeed,” and thus declared to be “ the Son of God, with power.”

First. If it be asked, Where was the place in which the Lord lay ? The apostle John gives the following answer. “ In the place where he was

crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre, there they laid Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

It may seem strange that in a scene of pleasure, in a garden, its owner should have placed a memento, which is so wont to strike a damp upon all human pleasures, and to check our joy amidst the most innocent and rational amusements. But, inconsistent as this may generally be found with the manners of the modern and the western world; unnatural as it may appear, at any time, or in any country, to have placed a sepulchre in a garden, this circumstance is so far from adding any thing to the incredibility of the marvellous relation in which it stands, that it rather tends to render it the more credible; as it is perfectly agreeable to the prevailing customs of the time and of the country, concerning which the evangelical historian speaks.

The Jews were not allowed to build sepulchres in their cities, lest the living might accidentally contract such pollution from the dead, as should disqualify them for the worship of the Sanctuary. It was required that their burying places should be at least two thousand cubits from their cities, and the sepulchre in which Jesus lay, was still further distant. And, as they were not allowed to build their sepulchres in any of their towns, so neither in Jerusalem were they even permitted to lay out their gardens. It is an old tradition which the Jewish writers have themselves preserved from the time of Christ, and even from an earlier period, that in Jerusalem no gardens were permitted, except a very few, which they specify, and which they tell us had remained undisturbed from the days of the ancient

prophets, viz. the gardens of Roses. The reason of the prohibition is not so evident as the fact; whether it proceeded from some superstitious prejudice, or from political considerations, does not appear; for it is merely remarked by the Jews, as a peculiarity belonging to the holy city.

Their own historian, who relates the destruction of Jerusalem, has observed, that Titus, the Roman general, found great difficulty, and was exposed to extreme danger in his approaches to take a view of the city, from the ditches that had been dug, and the fences that had been raised to divide the gardens which occupied a considerable space in the territory that lay round it. Since then, every citizen of Jerusalem, if he wished to have a garden, must have it without the walls, and must also have his burial place at a distance, it was convenient, not to say necessary, to have them in the same place. In a Jewish garden, therefore, it was reasonable to expect a sepulchre; and such was the distance of the cross from the walls of the city, that in the neighbourhood of the cross, it was reasonable to expect a garden.

It is an essential character of a true history, that even every incidental circumstance of the narration, however repugnant to those of earlier or later times, should be perfectly correspondent to the characters, the laws, the maxims, and the customs, of those that are the subject of it. And wherever this correspondence is invariably maintained, through the whole of a long and minute detail, it is an indication which may most reasonably be relied upon, that it is the work, if not of an eye-witness, yet of one who lived very near the times and the scenes in which he wrote. Nothing

is more easy than to preserve this correspondence when the writer's pen is governed by recent well known facts, and when he has no other intention than to describe the things he relates, as they actually took place; and nothing is more difficult, when imagination guides the pen, and the intention is to procure credit to things of its own creating. In the one case, so little thought is required, that an honest mind cannot easily mistake; in the other case, so extensive a knowledge, so particular and so laborious an attention is necessary, that even the greatest abilities seldom succeed; in some instance or other, the attention will fail, and the illusion betray itself. Throughout the whole of the gospel history however, various as are the scenes, the characters, the customs, and the manners, that are either largely and expressly described, or occasionally and obliquely alluded to, not one such example can be found; they always appear in exact conformity with the representations of other unconnected and approved writers of like antiquity; and for this reason alone, the gospel history is worthy of the most perfect credit, for it must have been written by persons well acquainted with the various facts that are delineated, and who were conversant among the scenes, the customs, and the characters they describe.

The place of the sepulchre wherein our Lord was laid, is one of the many instances, which, however improbable at first view, upon due consideration give great credibility to the history in which they occur, and which, taken altogether, will preclude from the serious and candid mind every suspicion of its truth. It is a circumstance which a writer, who had not written upon the spot, and from fact, would hardly have conceived; and which an impos-

tor, who had written from imagination only, most certainly would not have thought of. Though it was not ordinarily allowed to entomb the dead within the precincts of the holy city, yet, as a peculiar honour to the family of David, the Kings of that house were buried there. If the Evangelist, who was a Jew, and who could not be ignorant of this fact, had not been relating an actual event, but contriving a seducing story, it would have been most natural, by some means or other, (of which a variety could not have failed to occur to a man capable of inventing the other parts of the narrative) to have lodged the body of this King of Israel, the Lord of David, a descendant of that Royal House, even more illustrious than its founder, in the sepulchre of David. This is a burial place for the hero of the story, which would have insinuated itself into the imagination of a deceiver, rather than an unfinished sepulchre in a neighbouring garden. But the fact is, that it was nothing but the truth which the Evangelist recorded. He did not draw the circumstances from his own invention, nor mould them according to his fancy, he related them simply as they actually were.

As every part of a true story must cohere with all the rest, and every following incident arise out of those that preceded, so there were the most cogent reasons why our Lord should be laid where he actually was deposited, rather than in any other place, for it was "nigh at hand:" and hence arises another consideration to confirm our faith in him, and our attachment to his cause as the cause of heaven. A prediction had been uttered by him, in the most publick manner, concerning the time of his continuance under the power of death, and this prediction had been expressed on different oc-

casions, in different forms. At one time our Lord had said that he should be put to death, and that on "the third day he should rise again;" at another time, that "the Son of Man should be three days in the heart of the earth." It is evident that these two prophecies could not be made consistent with each other, unless he were buried on the same day he died; this then was absolutely necessary to the fulfilment of the prophecy. Now according to the Jewish computation of time, one day ended, as the next began, at six in the evening; but so much of the day had elapsed on which our Lord was crucified, before he was actually dead, that there remained no time to be wasted. Before six he must be interred, and four was now approaching when he died. Divine Providence was not miraculously to interfere with the kind and pious sentiments of his friends, who, having conceived no hope of his resurrection, could not think of burying him without the usual testimonies of affection to the dead. That they had not time to accomplish all they wished to do, and what was customary to be done, is evident from this; that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who had seen the body wrapped up in spices by Joseph and Nicodemus before they laid it in the sepulchre, according to the custom of the Jews, nevertheless came thither early in the morning of the next day but one, with other preparations for the embalment. Had there been no repository for the dead so near, or had a sepulchre been chosen at a greater distance, it is probable that the tenderness of his friends for their deceased Master, would have defeated the predictions of their living Lord: unless embalmed, though in an imperfect manner, they would not have buried him, and if longer time must have been spent in his conveyance to a more distant grave, he could not have been lodged there before the day on which he died was over.

But, by what means should they be urged to the necessary despatch, in contradiction to the feelings of friends so warmly attached to their Master by the deepest and tenderest sentiments of respect and affection ? It was appointed by that God, who is excellent in counsel and abundant in means, that his beloved Son should expire on the eve of the Jewish Sabbath. The day following it had been unlawful either to inter, to embalm, or to make any kind of preparation for the funeral ; by this means, therefore, Divine Wisdom made it impossible for them not to do what was necessary, in order to verify the prediction of our Lord. But even this would not have been sufficient to ensure its accomplishment, if the body must of necessity have been conveyed to some considerable distance from the cross. It was necessary, therefore, that to an approaching Sabbath, there should be added an adjoining tomb.

In the expedition used by this disciple, it is clear that they had no intention to provide for the verifying of these prophecies ; for, although they were more than once repeated, it is observed in the course of the narration, that the disciples understood them not, that they were afraid to inquire of their Master. that they comprehended not his predictions, either of his previous sufferings, his death, or the resurrection that should follow. It was only when the events actually took place, by which these declarations were fulfilled, that they apprehended their true meaning. So far from expecting a resurrection, they did not believe that he would die ; and it is evident from the dejection, the despair, and the terror into which they were thrown, when he actually did expire, that an event like this, was not “ in all their thoughts.”

The disciples then, in the haste made by them to deposit their Lord in the nearest tomb, had no sort of intention to render the accomplishment of his former predictions possible. They were the voluntary, yet unconscious instruments in the hands of God, whose secret, yet real and all powerful providence, without the least suspicion of the Agents employed, had prepared the series of events to accomplish the great and important ends proposed. "It is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes!"

In the second place, St. Matthew tells us that Joseph of Arimathea laid the body in a new tomb which was hewn out in the rock.

Does this appear a tedious and expensive method of forming a family burial place, and therefore create some hesitation about the fact? Let us remember that it appears from the history of the demoniac of Gadara, of whom it is said, 'that he came out of the tombs,' and that 'he abode in the tombs,' that the Jewish sepulchres were such as modern travellers have represented them; spacious vaults in the neighbourhood of their cities, hewn out of the rocks, in the sides of which they cut out the cells where the dead were deposited, and there closed up. Sarah was buried in the excavation of a rock at Hebron; the sepulchres of the house of David were of the same nature. In Isaiah's days, sepulchres were hewn out on high, and these final abodes, especially when intended for the rich and the great, were graven for them in a rock. The tomb of Lazarus was a cell hollowed out, in a natural or artificial cave. Such it seems in general, were the sepulchres of the Jews, in their own country, from the earliest, even to the latest times.

But though it had not been the custom of the Jews, to provide such receptacles for their dead, it would still have remained probable that the sepulchre in which Jesus lay was of this kind, for it was near the spot where he was crucified; and this single circumstance gives a degree of probability to what is said concerning it. Though, in itself, it had been a thing exceedingly improbable, that a family burial place should be hewn out of the solid rock, yet it is most natural to believe that a family burial place, in such a situation, must have been of this kind. If it were near the cross, it was upon a rocky hill, for such was Golgotha, where the cross of Jesus was erected; the soil of which had not depth enough to receive a subterranean building; in the sides of which an excavation would easily be made, and to the top of which, materials for any other kind of sepulchre, could not very easily have been conveyed.

But this is not all the evidence that the kind of sepulchre in which Christ was laid, suggests, to justify and confirm our faith. There was necessarily no entrance, no possibility of gaining admittance but by the mouth, at which the guard of those who had murdered him, were placed. No sooner had the report of his resurrection spread abroad, than it was answered by another, industriously procured, and sedulously propagated by his enemies, that the resurrection was a mere fiction of his friends, who had come by night and stolen him away. Had they then dug through the solid rock? The rock was as entire as ever, and there was no other passage to be found. Was the pretended sleep of the Roman soldiers so sound, that the removal of the stone did not awake them? Were the timid disciples become so courageous in the interval of a very few hours, that the attempt did not appal them?

Yet to the avowal of such improbabilities were the Priests and Pharisees reduced, by the very nature of the sepulchre wherein the body was deposited.

Again, To whom belonged the sepulchre in which Jesus lay ?

It belonged to Joseph, a rich and honourable counsellor. It was prophesied of the Messiah, that he should make his grave with the rich in his death. We have seen that his friends were compelled by the hour at which he died, to deposit him in the nearest sepulchre ; and we may observe, that by the very same means, provision was made by the providence of God, for the fulfilment of this other prophecy also. It is probable that he was not intended to continue in this grave. It was taken, because they were obliged to take it for a temporary repository ; and it is most likely that if the sabbath had not approached so very near, he had never been deposited there at all ; for it appears from some circumstances in the narration, that the sepulchre was not only new, but as yet unfinished.

Again, it is not observed by St. John without design, that in this sepulchre “ never man was yet laid.” If none but Jesus ever went into it, none but himself could proceed from it. This single circumstance, even although the body had undergone some considerable change by the temporary interruption of life, would sufficiently have ascertained the identity of the person, and precluded every doubt, whether the man that rose, was the very man who was crucified and buried there. Had it not been for the circumstance of the sepulchre being a new one, the adversaries of Christ might have admitted the reality of his resurrection, but have

denied the consequences which the Christians drew from it.—Overlooking the predictions of our Lord, or, denying their reality, they might have urged; ‘Did ever any man infer concerning him, who revived on being let down into Elijah’s sepulchre, that therefore, all he said was true?—Did any man infer from thence that he was the Son of God?’ ‘The premises,’ such cavillers might have asserted, ‘did not support any such inference: the fact had been, that some illustrious prophet, like Elijah, had been interred in Joseph’s sepulchre, and that Christ, when he was deposited there, had impinged against the relicks of that prophet, and revived.’ Such might have been the insinuations of the priests and rulers, and such was their influence with the people, that their insinuations might have gained credit. In a new sepulchre however, where never man had yet been laid, no relicks of a prophet could possibly be found. This circumstance therefore, was by no means insignificant, and the mention of it completes the argument.

Christians, you need not fear for the gospel you love, it is of God, and the power of man cannot overthrow it. No human artifice or violence can effect its extirpation. Even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It may be injured by the superstition and licentiousness of its professors as much, nay more, than by the ridicule and virulence of its opposers.—Obstructed or oppressed it may be, but it never can be extinguished or overcome. This divine seed which our heavenly Father hath planted, is indestructable and immortal; though it may not always thrive and grow according to your wishes and your prayers, though the tares with which it is intermingled may suppress and threaten to destroy it, you may trust in God that it shall be

preserved for ever. It is written in the decrees of heaven, it is promised in the gospel prophecies; the word of God faileth not; whatever seems to be defeating the accomplishment of its predictions, will eventually be overcome. The years are bringing on that glorious period, when the gospel shall be acknowledged by every tongue, and glorified in every life.—Christ was dead, and is alive again, and lives for evermore!

PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, we offer unto thee our most devout praise and thanksgiving, that thou hast vouchsafed unto us of this distant day such abundant evidence of the resurrection of thy Son from the dead! We thank thee for the numerous attestations that have been given to this glorious and consolatory truth. Hasten, we humbly beseech thee, the approach of that blessed period, when all who partake with us in the same common nature, and in the common bounties of thy providence, may become partakers also, in the invaluable blessings of thy Son's gospel.

Seeing that our blessed Lord is indeed risen from the dead, and that if we obey him, because he lives, we shall live also, may we mortify our affections which are on the earth, and put on that spiritual mind, which is life and peace. Enable us, O God, uniformly to maintain that superiority to all the trifles of this transitory state which becomes those who are called to glory, honour, and immortality, who are destined for the associates of the noblest spirits in the universe, who hope to live for ever where Jesus lives, in thy heavenly presence.

DISCOURSE XVII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TOMB OF JESUS, TENDING TO IMPROVE THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER.

PART II.

MATTHEW xxviii. 6.

Come see the place where the Lord lay.

WE purposed to divide our reflections upon the Tomb of Jesus into two great classes; arranging under the first, such as have a tendency to enliven and confirm our faith; and under the second, such as have a more immediate tendency to awaken and improve those good affections, that constitute the Christian temper, and adorn it. The first of these divisions being already finished, we proceed now to the second; and here also we purpose to separate our reflections into two classes; placing in the first, those that arise from the consideration that Jesus was deposited in the grave; and in the second, those that arise from the consideration that he did not continue to lie there.

In the first place, to send our thoughts into the place where Jesus lay, will help to cool our love of life, and our fond attachment to this present world. Why do we cling so closely to a scene in which we cannot stay? why do we rejoice so ardently in

a flower which the noon-day sun may wither, which the evening blast will certainly destroy? Why do we expect so much from a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away? Why are we so warm in our affections towards a state, where our sweetest draughts are not unmixed with the gall of bitterness; out of which, when our hopes and joys are most lively, we may suddenly be remanded; and in which, although this night were fixed for our departure, we may suffer, what would make that little interval appear long?

How short was the interval between the pass-over celebrated by Jesus in such sweet communion with his friends,—and that grave, which they bedewed with their tears? His hours were not many, but we cannot say so of his pains! What bodily anguish, what mental sorrow, did he not, in that short time, experience?—You know the story of Gethsemane; you remember the treacherous disciple; you are no strangers to the malice of the Jewish Council; to the mockery of Herod's Soldiers, or to the injustice of Pilate's sentence.—You well know, that neither the insults of the heathen soldiery, nor the tortures inflicted by the cruel scourge, could appease the fury of his countrymen; Jesus looked on them, and Pilate spake to them, in vain. What did he feel when they cursed themselves that they might gratify their malice with his death? “Crucify him, Crucify him,” was the dreadful cry: “let his blood be on us and on our children!” When that shout ascended to heaven from thousands of his countrymen, how, think ye, did Jesus look? what, think ye, did he feel?—If the spear had entered his heart whilst life yet remained, it had not inflicted so sharp a wound!

You know what crucifixion means—you can never forget the tragedy of Golgotha. Insulted by his cruel murderers, forsaken by his affrighted followers; one friend unable to sustain the mournful spectacle, yet unable to turn away from it; standing by his mother, crucified herself in the crucifixion of her Son! These were the sights he saw when lifted upon the cross, and these the agonies in which he died. These were the steps by which the Son of God went down into the chambers of death; through this series of sorrow, he entered into Joseph's tomb.—Into the grave, you too must enter, for it is the house appointed for all the living; and though you descend not there through the violence of wicked men, you will probably descend through the violence of keen diseases, and the tears of tender friends. No innocence of character, no usefulness of life, can redeem you from the grave, nor delay your arrival there, nor procure you warning of your death, nor defend you from affliction till it comes. We may trust our virtue to ensure to us the friendship of God, but, so long as there are evil passions in the world, the tomb of Jesus will admonish us, that we cannot trust it to preserve us from the enmity of men. We may trust our virtue to make all things work together for our good, but we cannot trust it to preserve us from every thing, which for the present, we must call evil. There are no means by which we can certainly attain the happiness of this world, and when we have obtained it, there are no means by which we can be assured that it will continue long.

Since then we cannot stay in this world, or, if we could stay, have no power to make its comforts permanent, or even of assuring ourselves that our condition in it shall be easy; since we live with the

scythe of death continually suspended over us, and know that "time and chance happeneth unto all," how absurd is it to be extravagantly fond of this life, how prudent, to be continually aspiring to a better?—In the world to come there are no faithless friends, no dangerous enemies, no false accusers, no unrighteous judges; in the world to come, there are no suffering relatives, no treacherous pleasures, no painful discipline nor unwelcome changes. In that world there are no weeping eyes, no swelling hearts, no dying agonies: in that world there is nothing to create either apprehension or regret; for there, virtue is not tried, but crowned.

Whatever comforts you may meet with in the way thither, receive them thankfully, and enjoy them cheerfully; it becomes, it behoves you so to do. But beware, my friends, that they do not seduce you from your duty. Beware, that for their sakes, you do not make yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Remember, Christians, that your citizenship is in heaven; that you are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and this world has no value to be compared with that, which it derives from the advantages it supplies, to fit yourselves for a better.

Secondly, If we send our thoughts into the tomb where Jesus lay, they can hardly return from thence, without bringing something to reconcile us to the troubles of this present life. That tomb, suggests enough to moderate our expectations from the present world, and our attachment to it, without either depressing or disturbing our minds; without either exciting our anxieties about its future scenes, or rendering us impatient under the present. Above the world we ought to be, yet not discontented with it; ready for the glorious change we expect; re-

joicing in hope of so blessed a translation, yet, all the days of our appointed time, in patient waiting, until our change come. If it be a good reason why our delights should not rise too high, that flowery as the path may be, the road will soon turn down into the vale of death, it surely is as good an argument why we should not be disturbed by the rugged and thorny passages of life, that at last, when we are quite weary, we shall lie down and take our rest.

In Joseph's tomb, how sweet is the sleep of Jesus ! There is nothing in that peaceful retreat to trouble him. His pains were acute, but they overpowered him at last—he was weary of his sufferings, and now he is at rest. Now, there is no anguish in his countenance, and there never will be more. How placid is that slumber ! He feels no more the cruel scourge ; he has forgotten the accursed tree. Ye priests and rulers, ye cannot wake him to renew your persecutions. Terrour has no more horrid spectacles to set before him. Pain has no more darts to throw, and death's last blow is struck. Peter, he thinks no more of thy denial ; even the infidelity of Judas disturbs him not. This peaceful sleep is not for a moment interrupted by the remembrance, either of insulting enemies, or forsaking friends.

John may come hither now to weep over his friend, without afflicting him ; and here, Mary, thou mayst sit down, and lean over that beloved Son, and pour out all thy griefs into his bosom, for it cannot hurt him now. What is it to him that his body was so cruelly torn and mangled ? what is it to him that by cruel hands he was crucified and slain ?—No more will it be to thee, my Soul, when

a few short days are over, that thou art grievously afflicted now, or that still severer troubles are awaiting thee!

When a wicked world distresses thee, remember, Christian, that thou shalt presently retire, where the wicked cease from troubling. When the cares of life press heavy on thee, look forward to that calm retreat where all anxieties are composed. When adversity approaches thee, maintain thy courage, Christian; tell her, that there is, at no great distance, an asylum whither she cannot come. When the pains of death lay hold on thee, remember that thy grave will be easier than thy bed: a dying Christian may find comfort in the thought, that they cannot last long. His slumbers in that land of silence will be as calm and easy as his Master's were; and, in the mean time, whatever sufferings may await him, he has this best of consolations, that they are not the tokens of God's displeasure; not the ministers of a vindictive judge to announce to him the approach of more tremendous sufferings, but the discipline of a tender parent, to work out for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

If indeed, the calamities of life were the evidences of God's rejection, who could abide his visitations? Jesus was never dearer to him than when he cried, "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—He never had more confidence in the friendship of God than when in his last words, amidst all the reproach and agonies of the cross, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

Christians, you may retain your confidence in God, even when he may appear to have forsaken

you, even when your good conscience is the only comfort that remains; when all your circumstances are full of trouble, and all your sensations full of pain, you may still call him *your* God: he will answer to that faithful compellation, he will not leave you without the strength you need, or withhold from you the recompense for which you long.

Thirdly, Whilst we turn our thoughts upon the place where Jesus lay, it is hardly possible that we should forget the fickleness of human favour. It may be lost without any fault of ours, and cannot be retained with certainty by our most assiduous endeavours to deserve it. It was the fury of the multitude that brought Jesus to his grave. Only five days before, that very multitude brought him in triumph to the temple—"Hosannah to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:"—now what a change! "Away with this Man, crucify him, crucify him!" "Release to us Barabbas!" What had Jesus done, that a murderer should be preferred before him? Jesus was, what he ever had been; holy, harmless, and undefiled;—how iniquitous would it have been, from his disgrace, to have inferred his guilt. Let us then not judge of characters by so precarious and dangerous a rule, as the esteem which they either may possess or have possessed in the world. Let us condemn the littleness of courting popular applause.

How light a soul is that, which can be lifted up by the breath of man! Who would be so credulous as to lean upon the wind? or so weak as to grieve, because it may chance to blow against him? Let us do our duty whatever be the event; and trust the master whom we serve, with our credit and es-

teem. From the praise of men, let us appeal to the praise of him who made them; his favour is our life, and although we should lose our life in seeking and maintaining his favour, it is not folly, it is not rashness, for his loving kindness is even better than life.

God cannot die nor change; but you cannot affirm this of your earthly friends. You cannot affirm that there is any certain method either of obtaining human friendship or of preserving it. To be good, and to do good, is the most promising expedient, and yet even this is by no means infallible. But the friendship of God we may by this means certainly obtain; and by this means it may be infallibly preserved. His friendship will comfort us in the want of all other friendships, it will help us in that solemn hour when all other friendships fail. Moreover, in the mean time, if we have the favour of God, he has human favour at his disposal, for all hearts are in his hands: he will prolong to us our friendships if it be good for us to enjoy them; and if our doings please the Lord, he has the power, and when it will not injure us, he will have the disposition also, to "cause even our enemies to be at peace with us."

Fourthly, If we think where Jesus lay, if, intending to be the better for our meditations, and not merely to indulge ourselves in vain speculations, we employ them on the Son of God entombed in Joseph's sepulchre, it is very natural that by this means our love to God should be improved. Jesus gave himself according to the will of God, even the Father, that he might take us out of this present evil world: that, by the influence of his example, carried to the last perfection, and by the power

of his doctrine established on the strongest evidence, he might deliver us from the prevailing carelessness and impenitence of the world, and engage us "by patient continuance in well doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality." God commanded, he obeyed. To his obedience we owe a debt which we never can repay. Is there nothing due to the authority that he so highly respected? It was his obedience to God, in the service of our souls, that brought him, through the pains of crucifixion, to the grave. For you, Christ gave himself; you own the value of the gift, and celebrate the beneficence of the giver. For you, God gave his Son; in that gift did he make no sacrifice? Was there no evidence of divine compassion and benevolence in a gift like this?—I here speak of the great and ever blessed God, in the language and with the sentiments of men; but for this I have his own authority, for he has himself reasoned, from our feelings, to his own conduct. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the infant of her womb? Yea they may forget, yet will not I forget thee, Sion. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Israel, how shall I deliver thee? How shall I make you as Admah and as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together." Did God love Ephraim and Israel, whose sins required to be chastened, better than he loved the meek and the holy Jesus?

What then will you render unto God for this his unspeakable gift? Obey the Son of God, who for his obedience unto death, is crowned with glory and honour; and fulfilling the conditions of them, trust ye in the promises of God: for, "if he spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all,

how," saith the Apostle, "shall he not with him, also, freely give us all things?"

PRAYER.

O LORD God Almighty ! As we call ourselves the disciples of thy beloved Son, may we verify our holy profession by our growing conformity to his example ! Like him it be our meat and drink to do thy will, and grant, that by meditating on the Tomb of Jesus, the world may be crucified to us, and we unto the world.

The friendship of man is as the morning cloud, or as the early dew, that soon passeth away.—Raise us, we beseech thee, into such superiority to that censure or applause of men, which would deter or seduce us from the path of duty, that no temptation which the world can offer, may ever shake our constancy in thy service, or at all abate our love to thee ! Looking unto Jesus the leader and finisher of the faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, may we not be weary nor faint in our minds, but may we run with patience and alacrity the race that is set before us !

DISCOURSE XVIII.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TOMB OF JESUS, TENDING TO IMPROVE THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER.

PART III.

MATTHEW xxviii. 6.

Come see the place where the Lord lay.

WHEN we send our thoughts into the Tomb of Jesus, and there image to ourselves that light of the world extinguished, that friend of man, that servant of the most high God, whose joy it was, from morning until night to be doing good, cut off from all usefulness, and cruelly disabled from pursuing it, what heart is not fired with indignation against those wicked hands by whom he was crucified and slain? What! nail him to the cross, who bare your burdens, who pitied your infirmities, who taught you the most important knowledge, who conversed among you with the most engaging sweetness, who fed you in the wilderness, who healed your sicknesses, and who raised your dead? Unfeeling multitude, who could urge with so much clamour, a demand, at once so ungrateful, so cruel, and unjust! Ye Priests and Rulers, is this the spirit of your religion and your laws? Do they give encouragement

unto evil doers, and afford no sanctuary unto those who do well?—Do they connive at the spirit of licentiousness and cruelty, and afford not so much as a toleration unto truth and virtue?—Pilate, if thou hadst obeyed the dictates of thy conscience, though thou mightest not have saved thy prisoner, and must, perhaps, have lost thy life, thou wouldst not have lost thy peace! But thy crime is light, in comparison of theirs. Over a more tumultuous people, a more irreligious priesthood, and a more lawless generation, thou couldst not have been appointed governor.

But come, my heart, forgive them, for the Lord forgave them; pity them, for he pitied them! They were men, they were our brethren, they were among those, to whom, by our Lord's express command, repentance and remission of sins were first preached, after he was risen from the dead. Some of them, many of them did repent. They were pricked to the heart when Peter spake to them of their crimes. They received the doctrine of him, whom they had persecuted unto death; they became the steadfast professors and the zealous preachers of his gospel, and were honoured with the gifts of the holy spirit.

Perhaps, when repentance began to be preached at Jerusalem, that very Priest who first proposed to lie in wait for Jesus, that very man who first stipulated with the traitor Judas for his price; that very witness who deposed against him what was neither criminal nor true; that very ruler, who was foremost to declare him worthy of death; these, perhaps, when repentance began to be preached at Jerusalem in the name of Jesus, were the first to hear, and to repent. This, however, is most certain, that

through their hands, some of whom had a dreadful share in this bloody tragedy, we have received the gospel. The first subjects of it were converted from among the enemies of its author ; and the day is coming, when, as we hope, when, as we believe, many who invoked his blood upon themselves and upon their children, shall stand with us at the right hand of the son of man.

Let us continue steadfast in the faith, that is justified by such witnesses ; let us adore the clemency that can pardon such guilt, and turn our indignation from the murderers of Jesus, against the prejudices that misled, and the vices that corrupted them. Let us beware of those prejudices that would alienate us from the truth ; and of those vices, that would make the truth our enemy !

What was it that deprived so many of the Jews of the benefits they might have derived from the preaching of our Lord ? What was it that deprived him of the honours that were due to him as their Messiah, as their promised and expected King ?—He was of Nazareth, an obscure and poor town of Galilee, whence nothing good could come ; he affected no worldly pomp, and he promised no worldly blessings !—If Jesus had employed his power of working miracles, to aggrandize his country, and to gratify his followers with wealth and power, they would have adored him : Because he promised no such happiness to his friends ; because his doctrine reproved, instead of encouraging, their worldly expectations ; because they had nothing to expect from him in this world, they agreed that he should not continue in it. Their worldliness caused his death ; it rendered them insensible to the excellence of his doctrine, unimpressible by the virtues of his character, incapable of restraint, even by those

awful miracles, which amply testified, that God was with him.

The love of this world was the death of Jesus; this was the evil passion that instigated the cruel resentment of the priests and rulers, that prompted Judas to betray, and that prevailed on Pilate to desert him.

Judas loved the world; he was impatient to possess more of its enjoyments; if his master were ever to assume a kingdom, it must be, he thought, when his life was in the power of his enemies; and if Jesus had no kingdom to assume, Judas would at least be a gainer by the price of his infidelity. Pilate loved the world; if he could have borne the resentment of the Jews; if he durst have put his honour and his life upon the issue of a trial before Cæsar, he would not have condemned the guiltless. From the love of the world arise almost all the mischiefs of human life; the hatred, the jealousy, the animosities, the cruelties, the injuries, and oppressions, that, from time to time, disturb the peace of families, of neighbourhoods, of societies, and of kingdoms.

Let not such a passion strike its root into your hearts; for you know not of what benefits it may deprive, or into what crimes it may betray you. It may prevent your reception of the truth; it may render you disobedient to its dictates; it may stir you up to enmity against its advocates; it may cause you to "deny the Lord who bought you," to betray the interests of truth and virtue, to "crucify unto yourselves the Son of God afresh, and to put him unto open shame."

Christians, consider what you are doing, when you make the world, and the things of the world,

whether it be its esteem, its pleasures, or its interest, essential to your peace!—what you are doing when you are indulging keen desires after them, or permitting your delight in these things, to grow upon your hearts. You are encouraging and strengthening those dangerous passions which betrayed the Jews into all the guilt of having despised and rejected the most important gift of heaven, and, finally, of having murdered the holy one of God!

When the world is spreading before you its allurements, send your thoughts into the place where Jesus lay. Tell the world, ‘You crucified my Lord;’ ask the world ‘would you destroy my soul? That I may have more of your vain amusements, of your unsubstantial honours, of your sensual entertainments, your precarious possessions, than virtue can command, or innocence will permit, shall I disgrace the christian character? Shall I cause the name of Christ to be blasphemed? Shall I destroy my hopes in that city “which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God?”—I am a Citizen of Heaven; my treasures, my real treasures, are in that world where my eternity must be spent, and the fashion of which passeth not away. Avaunt ye seducing vanities; be at rest ye worldly passions; I have learnt from him who was slain by you, to know the enemies that war against my soul. I am going whither he is gone, as fast as the wings of time can convey me; speedily, I shall have no more concern in this world, than my master had while he slept in Joseph’s tomb. I will keep my eyes upon my crucified Lord:—the reproach of Christ, is greater treasure than the riches of the world.—I have sworn fidelity to Jesus, as the Captain of my salvation, and “the life that I now live in the flesh, must be by the faith of the Son of God.”’

When, Christians, when will ye believe, that to be carnally minded is death? When will ye believe that the honour of the gospel and the interests of your own souls are dependent upon the spirituality of your hearts, and the purity of your minds? How long will ye continue unashamed to call yourselves the friends of Jesus, whilst ye remain the enemies of his cross, “by minding earthly things?”—There is but one unambiguous proof of your friendship to him; but one undeceitful principle on which you may expect his friendship; namely, your abhorrence of the vices he condemned, and your delight in all the virtues that he practised.

In the fifth place—To turn our meditations to our Lord deposited in Joseph’s tomb, will naturally increase our esteem and love of him. Virtue is, in every circumstance, an amiable object, but never more amiable than when in distress. When the tear stands trembling in her eye, and the groan that distends her heart is withheld from breaking forth; then it is, that she draws out all our soul towards her. In her honour and prosperity we love her; in her affliction and disgrace, we love her with a tenderer affection. To that fortitude which cannot be overcome, to that fidelity which cannot be shaken, we look up with reverence and admiration. In the very countenance of patience, meekness, and resignation, there are the sweetest and most powerful attractions. If it be for our sakes that virtue is distressed, if she suffer in our cause, what is there wanting to confirm her right to our esteem and love?—Christians! surely one look into the grave of Jesus, might cure you of that coldness and indifference, with which, at sometimes it may be, you are wont to regard him. Can any one reflect, by what a road, and with what a temper, he passed

through the valley of death into the mansions of the dead, and maintain a cold indifference towards him? What a heart must that be, in which a scene like this cannot raise the sentiments of admiration, esteem, and tenderness, or, in which, those sentiments, in the contemplation of such a scene, can be repressed?

What was it that brought your Lord, thus dishonoured to the grave? Did they fix him to the fatal tree that he might go about to do them good no more? Did they send him to this land of silence, that they might hear from him the glad tidings of forgiveness, and of eternal life, no more? Christians! that cross would never have been stained with the blood of Jesus, if the world had not been defiled with guilt; that sepulchre never would have held his lifeless body, if men had not broken the law of God. Ruin was before them if they returned not to their obedience, and Jesus died, to bring them unto God. He died, that our hopes of mercy might revive; he died, that having lived to God in this world, we might, for ever, live with him in a better. He died, that according to the promise of his father, he might become the author of eternal life unto all those who obey him.

Was he condemned at the bar of Pilate, that we might not be condemned at the bar of God? Did he despise all this shame, that we might not be overcome by the temptations of the world? Christians, you are to live for ever—what then do ye not owe unto him who hath abolished death? The love of Christ is essential to the character of a Christian—beware, that by your indifference towards him, ye render not yourselves unworthy of that holy name by which ye are called!

Hitherto our reflections on the sepulchre of Joseph have taken their rise from the consideration that the Son of God was deposited within it. I would now suggest, in conclusion, a practical remark or two, founded upon another reflection, viz. that he did not continue to lie there.—“He is not here,” said the angel, “for he is risen, as he said.”

How adorable is God, how wonderful in working, how excellent in counsel, how abundant in means! He speaks, and it is done. Although we were entombed in the bowels of the earth; though rocks and hills were heaped upon our graves, and legions of soldiers employed to prevent all approach; one angel, with a divine commission, one command from the mouth of God, would disperse the guard, and rend the rocks, and heal the wounds of death, and raise the dead to immortality!

Had you been sitting in the sepulchre of Jesus when the fortieth hour from his crucifixion was expiring, you would have seen the Lord, dead, cold, and unimpressible as the rock he lay upon, and all things around him, the guard who watched there excepted, still as the midnight calm:—the next moment would have shown you, the earth trembling, the Angel of the Lord coming down from Heaven, the sepulchre burst open, the guard confounded, and Jesus going forth invested with immortal life! In a moment the spirit took possession of the body whence it had retired; in a moment that heart was healed which the spear had pierced, and that countenance, late so pale and deathly, illumined with all the wisdom and all the virtue, which it was ever wont to express.

“How marvellous are the works of God! He is great, and his name is great in might; who in

the Heavens can be compared unto the Lord, who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto our God?" He is pursuing his designs, even when he seems to have forgotten them, and is carrying on his purposes by the very means that are employed to defeat them. The Jews did not interrupt his counsels when they laid Jesus in the grave. From that sepulchre, where all the hopes of his desponding disciples were entombed, the deliverer of Israel came forth, invested with supreme power, and aided, through the death he had endured, to send salvation to the ends of the earth. The ways of God are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts!

In the sixth place—When we look into the tomb of Jesus, and see that he is not there, we are unavoidably reminded of Zophar's observation, that "the triumph of the wicked is short." Triumph, indeed, for a time, they may; the enemies of Jesus triumphed when they saw him conveyed to the silent tomb. They persecuted him, till they destroyed him; they took away his mortal life, but to do more, was beyond their power; they could not prevent his resurrection; and the glories and felicities to which he rose were as far above their reach, as beyond their comprehension.

Christians, be not envious when you see the prosperity of the wicked; it is not long that they will triumph over you: keep the road you have wisely chosen; a few fleeting days will bring you to the land where all men shall receive according to their works.

Sinners, consider your condition; you are opposing his righteous will, against whom all opposi-

tion is vain. Happy, as you may be, in the sunshine of prosperity, even then, your happiness is not to be compared with that of the genuine Christian, although clouds and darkness may overshadow his dwelling! The path of the just is as the morning light which shineth more and more, until all his hopes and wishes are accomplished, in the glories of the perfect day; the way of the wicked is like the evening shades, enlivened it may be for a while by the varied colours of a setting sun, but which deepen and still deepen on the traveller as he proceeds, till at length, finding no road to the shelter which he wants, and stumbling at he knows not what, he is suddenly involved in all the horrors of midnight, cold, and darkness.

If there be any thing concerning which we can certainly be assured that it is an irreversible decree of God, it is this, which, from early times, he has again and again committed to his ministers and messengers. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him, for he shall eat of the fruit of his doings; but wo unto the wicked, for it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." It is the doctrine of the law, it is the doctrine of the prophets, and it is the doctrine of the gospel also.—Do you allege, sinners, that although you be not righteous, yet you are not wretched? Alas! your prosperity, instead of fostering your presumption, should alarm your apprehension. When the husbandman has cast the seed into his ground, does he hastily conclude, because the harvest comes not immediately, that it never will arrive? or, if he sow tares in his field, does he vainly expect, that wheat will be the produce?

Tell me, sinner, what rule of the divine conduct, what maxim of the divine government was ever vio-

lated? In what instance has the counsel of the Almighty been successfully opposed? It is the decree of God that we should come into this world, weak, helpless, and ignorant; dependent for every thing on the care and kindness of our progenitors; was ever any man born otherwise? It is the decree of God that no man shall take up his lasting abode in this world; has ever any man discovered the means of acting in opposition to this decree, and of making himself a permanent settlement here below? It is the decree of God, that according as is the conduct of our early life, such shall be the habits and character of our future years; can any man spend his childhood and youth in dissipation, indolence, vice, and folly, and, in his following years have no ignorance whereof to be ashamed, no habits of idleness and sensuality, wherewith to reproach himself?

By divine appointment, by the connexions which God has unalterably established, the futurities of the coming world, depend as certainly upon the conduct of this present life, as the futurities of this world depend upon its preceding periods.—You might as well hope to grow wise in the school of folly, virtuous in the school of vice, or to be made immortal by the deadliest poison, as to attain happiness by disobeying the commands of God. That you shall be judged hereafter, is as much a condition of your existence here, as that you shall die. And do you know what judgment is? It is the just accommodation of your circumstances to your character, according to the measure of your merit or your guilt. The very same connexion that the Creator and Ruler of the universe has inseparably established, between any other cause and its natural effects, between any other condition and its correspondent consequences, the same has he established between holiness and happiness. If you have not yet experi-

enced, that sin produces sorrow, it is because this is only your seed time, and that the time of harvest is not yet come. As easily may you build a house upon the surface of the ocean, as attempt to lay the foundation of true and durable enjoyment in the contempt of God's counsels, and the disobedience of his laws.

In the last place—To look into the tomb where Jesus lay, to employ our thoughts on the sepulchre from which he arose, has a natural tendency to confirm and encourage the joys and hopes of virtue.

Christians, there is a sense in which you may adopt the language of the Psalmist, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved." Yes, Christians, you may take up the Apostle's triumph. If you breathe his spirit, you may enjoy his transport; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, of his abundant mercy, by the resurrection of his Son from the dead, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "Because he lives, ye shall live also." Let us truly enjoy our lives in devoting them unto God—let us trust him, who gave our blessed Lord the victory over death, to befriend us also, in the dying hour.

We will take the comfort suggested by the empty sepulchre of him, by whose name we are called; we will take it for our departed friends; we will take it for our dying selves. In the Heavenly World we shall find our pious fathers, and thither our pious children shall hereafter repair. In that glorious morning when we shall have got this

conflict over, we shall tell the king of terrors, that the victory is ours!

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain, in the Lord.”

PRAYER.

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who can understand his errors? cleanse thou us from secret faults, keep back thy servants also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over us. Deliver us from that carnal mind which is enmity against thee, and from that love of this world which so fatally opposes itself to every thing which is truly excellent.

Blessed be thy name that thou hast laid help for us, on one, who is able to save unto the uttermost all those who come unto thee by him! In the gospel dispensation, in the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Lord, in his obedience unto death, and his exaltation to a kingdom, thou hast furnished us with all desirable advantages to deliver us from the dominion of sin, or to preserve us from it. May the love of Christ constrain us to live not unto ourselves, but unto him. May we approve ourselves his faithful subjects by a conscientious obedience to his laws, by a growing resemblance to his character, and by our sincere concern to preserve the peace, and to promote the interests of his kingdom. Whatsoever things are just, true, pure, lovely, venerable, and of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, on these things may we meditate, and in these things may we ever be studious to excel.

DISCOURSE XIX.

DAVID'S MORNING HYMN OF PRAISE.

PSALM XIX. 1....7.

1. The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. 2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. 4. Their sound is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world : in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun : 5. Who is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. 6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven ; and his circuit unto the ends of it : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

It has been objected that the celebrated Author of this Ode, and of many other exquisitely beautiful devotional pieces, was not made a better man by his devotion, that his moral conduct was not improved by it, and that his memory, in one fatal instance at least, is stigmatized by crimes of the deepest die. That in that instance he was deplorably deficient in the virtues of self-government ; that one unhappy deviation from the paths of rectitude, in his case, as in that of a thousand others, led on to another, and to another, still more flagrant and atrocious ; that being raised to the pinnacle of human greatness, the power he thought he possessed of extricating himself from the ignominy of his vices, supplied an additional temptation, which he

had not the resolution to withstand, no one surely will deny: let his example be held up as an awful proof of the seducible nature of the human heart, and "let him who standeth, take heed lest he fall."

But, does it follow from the inefficacy of David's piety, on some particular occasions, to overcome the fatal effects of headstrong passion, that therefore, respecting the whole of his character, it was of no avail? Contrast with this the many virtues by which he was distinguished, his fortitude, his magnanimity, his ardent zeal for the prosperity and happiness of his people. Contrast with this his deep repentance, when the Prophet of God awakened his sleeping conscience, by the beautiful parable of the one Ewe Lamb. Can any one read the heart-rending strains of deep contrition in his penitential Psalms, and entertain a doubt that his piety did not exceedingly meliorate and improve his character?

But it is not our design at present to weigh in the balance, the faults and the virtues of this eminent person. His virtues surely we may safely imitate, notwithstanding the dark shades by which they were sometimes overcast. Like him, when we awake in the morning, enabled to return with renewed cheerfulness and vigour to the several duties of our respective stations, we also may humble ourselves before the presence of God. Like him, at morning, at evening, at noon and at midnight, may we pour out our praises and thanksgivings. Like him, we may begin and end the day with some serious inquiry into our own hearts and lives; with some devout reflections on the mercy and providence of God, or some pious meditation on his works or in his law. When other duties of more

immediate obligation, call not for our attention, as they were his, so these also should be our employment and delight : and by these means, like him, we may endeavour to attain that sensibility of heart towards things invisible and spiritual ; to that ardent love of God ; to that elevation and fervour of devotion ; which so eminently adorned his character ; and by which he stands so illustriously distinguished among the sons of men.

The subject of this psalm naturally suggests the supposition, that it was one of David's morning meditations. Risen from the bed of sleep, his powers refreshed, his heart enlivened, the exercise of his understanding clear, vigorous, and easy ; his soul breathing out the most fervent gratitude towards that God, whose omnipresence and whose omnipotence he acknowledged, it is not improbable that he was alone, walking in his palace on the hill of Sion ; meditating on those mercies which never failed him, and on those demonstrations of the glory of God with which he was continually surrounded. Every object he beheld aided his devotion, afforded him new matter of admiration and of praise, and seemed to declare aloud the greatness and the goodness of that secret power, by which they were originally formed, and by which they are perpetually preserved in being.

The shades of night were probably now passing away, and the dawn of day beginning to display its transcendent beauties ; all nature with himself was revived, risen as it were from the dead ; and as darkness drew aside her curtain from the world, a new creation rose up before his eyes. Transported with the glorious sight, he indulged the rapture it inspired in the genuine spirit of devotion.

All the happiness he beheld, he referred to the first great source of good; all the power which was displayed before him, he ascribed to the divine energy and operation; and all the wisdom discoverable in the constitution of nature and the various dependences and connexions of its principles, he imputed to the great original, by whose word the worlds were formed, and who made them all, in number, weight, and measure.

Here, as in a mirror, he beheld the face of his Creator; he considered every expression of contentment or of gladness displayed in the animal creation, as a hymn of praise and of thanksgiving to the Almighty, and every being that he looked upon, as a pillar erected to his honour. The whole fabrick of the universe seemed as one mighty monument, raised to perpetuate the conviction of his existence, his universal government, and the remembrance of his transcendent excellence. 'How astonishing,' would he exclaim, 'are the degrees of excellence I can observe between the reptile that crawls beneath my feet, and that vital, rational, immortal image of God himself, that animates this clay-built body! No power of mine, raised as I am to the pinnacle of human greatness, could make a pile of grass, or even create the smallest particle of matter. The secret energy that sustains so wonderfully this various fabrick, that feeds these vital powers, that directs, combines, and actuates their operations; that prolongs them from time to time, that renews them in their respective seasons, and that carries them through their successive changes to their appointed periods, surpasses all my conceptions, and eludes my most diligent inquiries. O God, the more I am conversant with thy works, the more arguments do I gather of thy perfect skill, of

thine infinite wisdom ; the more instances do I collect of thy boundless goodness ; the greater conviction do I feel of my incapacity to fathom the depth of thy counsels, and of my total inability to show forth all thy praise ! How manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all ; all thy creatures praise thee ; the earth is full of thy riches, and so also is that great and wide sea, the emblem of thine own immensity, where my views are lost, and my prospects are unbounded !

Whilst thus the thoughts of the Psalmist were ranging through the earth, and gathering from every object that met his eye, some fragrant instance of praise and of thanksgiving ; whilst thus, in a manner perfectly becoming the intellectual and moral nature, he was presenting his morning sacrifice, the sun arose—he turned to behold that glorious luminary, and struck with its majestick splendour, his thoughts were instantly transferred from earth to heaven. His heart already glowing with sentiments of piety, the whole current of his affections set so strongly towards God, that it could not be impeded or diverted, but bearing forwards, and carrying every thing along with it, augmented by every object that it met with, he proceeded in the same strain of thought, and the same spirit of devotion, to adopt the language of the text. ‘ Nor is thy bounty, O God, confined to the earth on which we dwell ; nor are thy perfections written alone on the dust of the ground, or merely enstamped upon every animal that treads there.—That azure canopy which is stretched out above, with all the shining ornaments that distinguish it, an infinitely greater, and an infinitely nobler fabrick, acknowledges the same original, and derives alike its splendours, and its existence, from our God.’ “ Of old did he lay the

foundations of the earth, and the heavens also are the work of his hands." 'While things terrestrial are so loud and so harmonious in his praise, celestial things are neither silent nor unintelligible. Ask them, if the splendours with which they shine be their own? Make reason their interpreter, and they answer, No.' "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." 'Look upon the firmament, was it always thus arrayed?—No; to the eye of reason, to the judicious and discerning mind, there appear those marks of derivation and dependence which condemn the worshipper of the celestial luminaries; which demonstrate that they also are creatures of the same power, that made the earth and its inhabitants: so similar in all its laws, so closely connected with them in all its interests, we are not permitted to ascribe to them any higher honour, than that of being the heralds of our Creator's praise.'

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night, sheweth knowledge." 'It is not in one place or aspect of the heavens only, that the glory of God is revealed: the noon day splendour displays indeed that uncreated and eternal source of light, in which there is no darkness at all; but it is not less clearly, nor less abundantly manifested in the more numerous, though more distant suns, which we see burning in the midnight firmament.'

'Not merely once has this glorious host displayed itself in the cause of religion and of God. Once to have beheld the starry firmament; once to have seen the sun "rejoicing in his strength;" to have enjoyed one cheerful day, to have waked through

one awful night, though from henceforth the amazing vision had never more been exhibited to our sight, must have left behind them such impressions, as no time could have effaced ; such matter of serious contemplation, as could not have failed to dispose the thoughtful mind to religious sentiment and devout affection ; such deep conviction, such rejoicing evidence of an eternal and infinitely perfect Being, who made the universe, and rules it, as could hardly have failed to create an ardent desire of obtaining a more perfect knowledge of him ; a sincere delight in the contemplation of his perfections, and the study of his will, and a solicitous endeavour to obtain the consolation of his friendship.'

Thus, in like manner as we are told that those glorious spirits, who dwell in his immediate presence, cease not day or night to celebrate in the most perfect manner the high praises of the Lord, so the Psalmist has most beautifully and justly represented the celestial luminaries as declaring their Creator's Glory, and never ceasing to declare it : as delighted with the employment and never weary of the work ; as burning with a fervent zeal to signalize themselves in the service of their Maker ; as actuated with an intelligent and rational solicitude that their ministry should prove successful with the sons of men ; successful to impress their minds with a sense of their duty unto God, and to engage them in the pious contemplation of his excellencies, and a cheerful conformity to his will. The day therefore, when it has finished its course, when it is taking its leave of those whom it has been cheering and enlightening, and is now departing into eternity, to return no more unto mankind ; is most beautifully described by this sacred Poet as looking backwards to address its successor ; committing to the coming day, the ministry,

which itself was laying down ; urging the next rising morning, to begin with the Almighty's praise ; to prolong the instructive lesson, which itself could stay no longer to inculcate ; and to resume those pious admonitions, which itself could repeat no more. "Day unto day uttereth speech," and in like manner, proceeds the Psalmist, "night unto night showeth knowledge." As if the night also, not contented with what itself had revealed of the awful grandeur and boundless majesty of God ; not satisfied with the lessons which itself had read to the serious and rational spectator, of its solemn shades, and its living fires ; leaves it, when the returning day has put an end to its own ministry, leaves it in pious charge with the night that shall succeed, to resume its doctrine, to continue its instructions ; and, when its own course is likewise finished, to teach its successor, the night that shall follow, in what manner to employ its powers and its voice to perpetuate the Creator's praise—"Night unto night showeth knowledge."

In this manner, with the greatest propriety, as well as with the most lively eloquence, does the Psalmist represent to us the uniformity of Nature, and the regular revolutions of the heavens, with the evidence they afford of that kind and powerful Providence from which their motions proceed, and by which they are preserved and governed. The marks of their Creator's infinite perfection are indeed so clearly impressed upon the heavens above, that no serious observer can err, either concerning their origin, or concerning the amiable and adorable character of their great Author.

To express this sentiment, in itself so plain, so just and true, we see the Psalmist has employed

the noblest imagery, he has ascribed to the heavens, intelligence and speech: he has animated the celestial orbs with the fervours of intense devotion, and has endued them with a voice that may be distinctly heard by all the inhabitants of this world. He describes their alternations, their different states and conditions, as speaking one unto another in the audience of mankind, concerning the infinite perfection of that uncreated mind, from whose good pleasure and whose power these vicissitudes proceed.

Having thus, with this bold, yet not unjustifiable sublimity, celebrated the skill of the Creator as manifested in that majestick canopy which he hath spread over our heads, it seems as if the thought had struck his mind, that perhaps his imagination had been too daring in its flight; and that the chief of the choir, to whom this Psalm was addressed, and the congregation by whom it was to be employed in the publick worship of God, might be startled and confounded, and doubtful in what manner they were to understand the royal Poet, when they heard him ascribing to the heavens, intelligence and speech. They saw the sun from day to day repeating his accustomed journey, but they heard no voice from heaven; they saw the moon and stars, from night to night travelling their appointed course, but the most solemn silence was observed. To obviate any doubts or difficulties, that from this cause might disturb and perplex the mind, the Psalmist goes on in the same sublime and pious strain in which he had began.—“No speech, no language, their voice is not heard.”

The beauty of the original is absolutely lost, the sense exceedingly misrepresented, and the connex-

ion strangely violated, as it stands in our version; for, the Psalmist is not here asserting that the voice of the heavens is universally heard, and is universally understood by people of all nations and all languages; this, he asserts in the next verse, and is here only preparing the way for that observation. Here, he acknowledges, that in strict propriety, in the reality and truth of things, these heavenly luminaries have no speech nor language, no voice to be perceived by the external sense; nevertheless that their sound (not their *line*, as it stands in our version, which is another error that has greatly impaired the beauty and perspicuity of this inimitable ode) is gone forth through all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

The sense and connexion of the whole passage, literally interpreted, is as follows, viz.

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his workmanship. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge: no speech have they indeed, no language, and their voice is not heard; yet, into all the world is their sound gone forth, and to the end of the earth, their words.” i. e. It is true, the heavens have no audible voice, but they have language, which all rational spectators can understand. If they merely spake to the external sense, by those only would they be understood whose language might be similar to theirs—they address not the ear, but the understanding; their language is universal; it is heard from one end of the creation to the other; understood, not only throughout this earth of ours, but throughout all the universe of God; and wherever there is an intelligent spectator, whether here or in any other world, there, they proclaim the goodness of their Creator.

Having thus celebrated the glory of God, as in general displayed in the firmament of heaven, he proceeds to take more especial notice of that sublime object, which seems first to have drawn his meditations to the heavens—the sun just rising in his sight.

“In them” (i. e. in the heavens,) he proceeds, “hath God set a tabernacle for the sun.” Here, if I am not mistaken, the Psalmist speaks of that purple light, which is the forerunner of the morning; of those painted clouds which usually adorn the eastern heavens before the rising of the sun. On these he had been gazing, expecting that ere long this glorious luminary would step forth from behind them, and show himself unto the world. Very naturally and very beautifully the Psalmist considered these as a tabernacle, a splendid pavilion wrought by the hand of God; where, this great source of day, during the shadows of the night, had reposed himself, and from which he was about to issue forth, with renewed brightness and recruited strength. This conception he prolongs, and pursues the idea through the following verses.

“In them hath he, (God) set a tabernacle for the sun, who,” adds the Psalmist, “is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit to the end of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” — How vast, how amazing is the course he must finish before night, from that extremity of heaven whence he is now issuing forth, through the immeasurable vault that bends above my head, to the extremest west, where I last night watched his departing beams. Nor, is the extent, or the rapidity

of his yearly circuit which forms our seasons and their changes, less wonderful than those of his diurnal round, which constitutes our day and night; by means of one, the inhabitants of every land enjoy in regular succession the benefits of light and darkness; by the other, at uniform and equal periods, every climate is blest with the necessary interchanges of seed time and harvest, summer and winter; and thus are the benefits of his enlivening warmth, equally and liberally dispensed to every portion of this globe, and to every creature under heaven.'

Thus have I endeavoured to illustrate to you the true sense, beauty, and piety, of the first part of this sacred hymn. You have seen that it suffers much and loses a great deal of its perspicuity, its elegance, and sublimity, from the inaccuracy of our version. There is however in our language a poetick version which does greater justice to the original; I will not say that the worthy author has retained all the thoughts and all the sublimity, together with all the simplicity of the royal poet, but this I may say, that it is composed in the same elevated spirit of devotion, and that whoever has sufficient sensibility of heart to relish and admire the one, cannot be disgusted or unaffected by the other.

1. THE spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim.
2. The unweary'd sun, from day to day,
Doth its Creator's power display;
And publishes to ev'ry land,
The work of an almighty hand.
3. Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale;

And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth ;

4. Whilst all the stars which round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

5. What, tho' in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball ;
What, tho' no real voice nor sound
Amid these radiant orbs be found ;

6. In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice ;
For ever singing, as they shine,
" The hand that made us is divine."

A.

PRAYER.

Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? or who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto our God? Thou, O Lord, art the eternal fountain of light, and life, and happiness; the creator of all things visible and invisible; the constant supporter, the gracious governour, the daily preserver of universal nature; the tender father and the righteous judge, of angels and of men!

Thou art great, O Lord, beyond our most enlarged conceptions, may thy grandeur make deep impressions on our souls; may we never presume to take thy holy name upon our lips, unaccompanied by the deepest sentiments of reverence and awe; for who shall not fear before thee, and glorify thy name?—Thou art good also beyond all our gratitude, and thy mercies unto us, surpass all number!

What shall we render unto thee for all thy benefits? We would love thee with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength!

Most devoutly do we bless thee, O most merciful Father, that thou hast made us capable of knowing whence all our comforts flow; of rendering thee a reasonable voluntary service; of holding some communion with thee upon earth, in the sacred duties of religious meditation, prayer, and praise; and of rendering ourselves more fit for the exalted services of thine heavenly kingdom, when time and days shall be no more!

DISCOURSE XX.

ON THE GLORY OF GOD, AS DISPLAYED BY
THE HEAVENLY LUMINARIES.

PART II.

PSALM xix. 1.

The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth
his handy work.

THERE is scarcely an instance of neglect or insensibility more unworthy of our character, than to live surrounded on all sides by ten thousand objects that proclaim the glory of God, and yet to live carelessly and stupidly inattentive to their voice; ind devoutly unobservant of that secret agency by which they are sustained and governed; veiled, indeed, it must be confessed, by the intervention of second causes, but the glory of which, notwithstanding, shines through the veil with such brightness, that every attentive eye may see, and every human heart is bound to acknowledge, to admire, and to adore it.

Rejecting every thing abstruse or remote from common apprehension, I shall avail myself of the text as a guide; for we shall stand in need of some pilot or landmark, that we may not lose ourselves in so immense an ocean. Even those instances of

divine perfection, which are manifested in the heavens, and lie open and level unto common apprehension, are so very numerous, that not one, nor many Discourses would be sufficient to collect them. I must content myself, therefore, with the mention of a very few; which may serve as a kind of specimen of the rest, and as an illustration of the manner in which we ought to meditate on the works of God.

It is most natural, in the first place, to take notice of the external aspect of the heavens, for even thence we may learn something of the glory of their Maker, and derive some considerations to increase our reverence of him. In the productions of human power and skill, there is ordinarily something even in the first appearance, previous to any diligent examination, without any accurate survey, which bespeaks the excellency (if the works be indeed excellent) of the hand that made them, and which demonstrates that they are the performance of a master: in the works of God, therefore, we may reasonably expect, that on the most transient survey, there should appear something infinitely magnificent and great, something that should mark them as divine.—The expectation is just, and, in no instance, will it ever be disappointed, but in no instance will it be more completely satisfied than in the contemplation of the heavens.

In that azure vault, though we regard not the luminaries that revolve there, the most perfect simplicity is united with the most majestick grandeur. Who could stretch out the heavens but an Almighty arm? or who could paint them in their various attractive and ever-changing beauties, but an all-skilful Artist? In the noon of day, what

surpassing glory ; in the noon of night, what solemn shades ! If we look to the rising sun, how majestic is his motion ! how bright his radiance ! the whole scene of his appearance, how magnificent and sublime ! If we gaze on the setting sun, what eye is not struck by the innumerable dyes with which he tinges the western Heavens ? What art can rival the painting of his declining beams, or what heart does not feel itself composed and softened, by a spectacle, so tranquil, and serene ? The mid-day blaze is at once an image and a proof of his unutterable glory who dwells in light to which no man can approach—the ten thousand lamps that adorn the nightly firmament, that even cheer its horrors while they make its gloom more sensible and awful, could be suspended by no other, than an Almighty Architect. That solemn scene declares his power to involve us in the most tremendous ruin ; it speaks also of his readiness to set before us all the profusion of his glory, and his love ! The source of day speaks aloud the praise of that uncreated light in which there is no darkness at all : and when the moon issues forth to supply his absence, most powerfully does she remind us of the tender mercy of God ; who gives to man every blessing in its season, and who would not leave us to despondence or to want. Whilst her incessant changes exhibit to us an emblem of the inconstancy of earthly things, and of human characters, she exhibits a proof also, of an unchanging hand, that guides and rules her motions ; even the “ father of lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of changing.”

Secondly, The heavens still further reveal the glory of God, if we attend to the magnitude of the celestial bodies, the vast extent of the space in which

they move, and the rapidity with which their motions are performed.

With a very few exceptions, every star that we behold is another sun unto another system; placed in the centre of many worlds, and affording unto each as they revolve around it, their proper measure both of light and heat, in their appointed seasons. If so many suns, how many worlds? If so many worlds, what numbers can express the inconceivable multitude of their inhabitants? all of them the creatures of divine power, the monuments of divine wisdom, the objects of divine love!—Think then, while you are gazing on the starry firmament, how many myriads of unnumbered worlds are at that moment rejoicing in the goodness of their Maker, and are even then praising Him whose praise the starry firmament invites us also to celebrate. Of all these innumerable worlds, that one on which we live, vast as we conceive it, is among the least that we behold. There are those even in our own system, to whose ocean our ocean is a pool, and to whose mountains our mountains are as the smallest hillock!

These observations may a little assist you in conceiving something of the vast magnitude of the works of God; but would you be informed how wide is the extent of his creation, I can do little more than tell you, that as his works for number are innumerable, so the space they occupy for extent is immeasurable. It may aid your thoughts to be told, that if you travelled round this globe for more than 3000 times, you would not have travelled by much so far as the earth is distant from the sun; and that taking even the velocity of a cannon-ball, you could not complete your journey thither in twenty-two

years. Yet, astonishing as is the space that is stretched out between our world, and the sun which enlightens it daily by his beams, if compared with the space that is comprehended within all the worlds that revolve around him, it is not so much as the area of this house of prayer, to the city wherein it stands, and, in comparison of the universe, even that space is not as a hand's breadth to this globe ! What an idea does this give us of the extent of the Divine Presence ! God is, wherever there are any of his creatures ; out of his sight, or reach, or power, or knowledge, you cannot go. Though you flew with the rapidity of a ray of light, and prolonged your flight unto eternity, still as you left new worlds behind, new worlds would be continually passed by, and new worlds continually coming into view !

Sinner, when the day of retribution comes, whither canst thou betake thyself for refuge ? What art thou, that wrath should not come upon thee to the uttermost ? Sinner, stand in awe of God ; think how terrible a thing it is to fall into his hands, what art thou that in his wrath he should not crush thee ?

Go where thou mayst, faithful Christian, whilst thou art in this world, or when thou leavest it ; thou canst not go " where universal love shines not around," thou canst not go away from God ; thou canst not go where he will not be with thee, and delight in thee, and pour out the riches of his liberality upon thee !

But to return from these reflections on the vast extent of the universe, it remains to be observed under this head, that the glory of God appears not only in the immense extent of the heavens, and in the magnitude of the celestial orbs, but also in the

inconceivable rapidity of their motions. There is, even in our own system, a planetary world, which proceeds in its course with a speed so vast and astonishing, that even thought is unable to keep pace with it. Since the commencement of the present hour, now near its close, it has passed through no less a space than upwards of 40,000 miles. Such is the rapidity of this earth, on which we live, in its annual circuit round the sun, and equal to this, or even greater, is the velocity of some others of the planetary worlds—Measure, if thou canst, my soul, or own that no finite creature can measure, the amazing power that fashioned these mighty orbs, or the force that impels them in their courses !

Thirdly, The heavens will reveal to us still more of the glory of God, if we attend to the constancy and harmony of their motions.

It was originally a promise of the Creator, and it has been graciously fulfilled from the beginning, that seed time and harvest, summer, and winter, heat and cold, day and night, should not fail. As was the first day that shone upon the world, so has this day been. As was the first night that overshadowed it, so will the night that is approaching, be. One year, like every other year, is made up of seasons, regularly and uniformly interchanging. The aspect of the heavens, and the appearance of the earth, at any given period, has exactly answered to their aspect and appearance in any other corresponding period, from this day backwards, through six thousand years, to the birthday of our world ! And, what is true of this world for that period, is doubtless true of ten thousand other worlds ; for a period perhaps ten thousand times as long.

What an argument is here of an all wise, almighty, and all gracious Providence ; continually presiding over the worlds that he has made ; actuating, directing, controlling, and governing all their revolutions ! If at any one moment, their beauty, their order, and their magnificence, be a demonstration that they are the creatures of unerring wisdom ; the perpetuity of that magnificence, of that order, and of that beauty, is a demonstration equally clear, of the constant agency, and providence of God.

Whence is it that the sun never has mistaken its rising, nor the moon her going down ? Whence is it that the seasons have never been inverted nor confused ? Whence is it that night has always come at its expected period to the repose of the weary labourer ? Whence is it that the harvest never has forgotten to ripen that seed, which the spring invited the industrious husbandman to sow ? In the heavenly orbs, whence do the vicissitudes of day and night, and of the seasons, flow ? there is in them no memory, no reason, no intelligence ; they move as they are impelled, and have no other powers or influences than those that are imparted to them, or impressed upon them, by a foreign hand ; by the energy of an omnipresent spirit : it is to the glory, therefore, of that omnipresent spirit, that they shine : In all their changes they obey his will, and in all their revolutions they manifest his wisdom and his goodness. It is because he changes not, that the order which was first established, is not inverted or invaded ; “ all things continue unto this day according to his ordinances, because all are his servants.”

But again. It is not only the constancy and regularity of the heavenly revolutions that declare the

glory of God; his glory is still farther illustrated by their perfect harmony and agreement. The host of heaven is innumerable; millions of worlds are continually moving with infinite rapidity through the immeasurable space that lies around us; whence is it that they prove so faithful to their courses, that they never wander from their own proper path, that they never interfere with each others circuit, that no concussions or convulsions happen, and that the benefits which they are intended mutually to impart, are never intercepted or defeated? In many instances their paths cross each other, whence is it that no mischiefs come to pass? Let one world only arrive a little sooner or a little later at a certain point, and how tremendous would be the ruin that would ensue!

Fourthly, The Heavens will reveal to us still more of their Creator's glory, if we attend to the utility of the heavenly bodies, and of their motions.

No one can be insensible of the innumerable blessings we derive from the agency of that glorious luminary, of which the Psalmist so beautifully says, that "God hath set a tabernacle for him in the heavens." It is evident to all, that the sun is the great source of our light and heat. Without light, the face of nature would be one universal blank—all would be gloom, discomfort, suspicion, and dismay. The various beauties with which the face of nature is adorned, of such efficacy to delight the heart of man, and to delineate his Creator's excellence, would then have been bestowed in vain: they could not have administered either to the pleasure or instruction of the children of men, or have discovered any thing of their Creator's excellence. Confined, as must then have been their knowledge

and improvement, if indeed their very existence in such circumstances could have been preserved, what would have been the intricacy and confusion of their affairs? what utter strangers must they have been to those things most intimately connected with them, and which are, at the same time, most delightful, and most important to their welfare? So unfavourable, indeed, would have been a situation like this, to the moral character and moral conduct of men, that without the hope of an approaching dawn, without the expectation of better things to come, life, in this condition, could hardly have been esteemed a blessing.—So miserable and so fatal would have been the consequences, if we had been deprived of those cheering rays, which manifest at once the beauties and the wonders with which we are surrounded!

If again that glorious luminary should withhold his heat, if the genial warmth that he imparts to all things here below, were intercepted, or, if our Almighty Maker had not provided for us so constant and convenient a source of vital warmth and comfort, the earth had been congealed into one solid and inseparable mass; no fluids would have circulated through the globe, or through the animal or vegetable system; and those motions and revolutions on which every kind of life depends, would have stood still. Day and night would then have had no distinction, but that of light, and the want of light; and the seasons would have brought no changes, but what consisted in their different proportions to each other of day and night; so useful and so necessary are the solar beams to enlighten and to animate this world of ours; so necessary to the comfort, as well as to the preservation of its various inhabitants.

Yet various and unspeakably great as are the blessings we derive from the light and heat of the sun; perpetual day would not be a blessing. The interchanges of day and night, are not only agreeable in themselves for their variety, useful for the different displays they exhibit of the Creator's wisdom and power, the one necessary to action, the other friendly to repose; but to these also, to the regular return of evening cold, as well as of daily warmth, we are indebted for those dews and rains that are the refreshment and the nourishment of the vegetable kingdom, without which, the earth would be parched into dust and ashes.

These are a mere specimen, two or three select instances out of a thousand that might be collected, of the benefit we derive from the presence, and the absence of the sun.

If again we turn our thoughts to the vicissitudes of the seasons, another benefit which we derive from the great lamp of day; we shall have a new instance of the Creator's goodness in the utility of this constitution. Admitting that in itself some one of the seasons may appear more desirable than another, yet each has its peculiar benefits and beauties; and a regular alternation by producing a combination of all their blessings, is more desirable than the unvaried continuance of any one season.

If we had continually been indulged with the pleasures and the benefits of summer, the other side of the globe must have been frozen in eternal winter. Nor should we have had any cause to rejoice in the indulgence long; for, as all the seasons are accommodated to the service and the constitution of mankind, so likewise are they adapted one unto an-

other. If continual winter were to prevail, the productions of the earth would not suffice for the subsistence of a very small part of those that now live comfortably upon it; and if, on the contrary, it were continually teeming with the profusion of summers' fruits and herbage, all care and forethought, and probably in great measure, all industry and activity, on the part of man, would be precluded, to the great detriment both of his body and mind. The gifts of the Almighty would be vainly lavished in a measure far exceeding the wants of his creatures, and in a manner much unbecoming the wisdom of the bestower. The winter not only seasonably causes the earth to cease from her labours, when she has sufficiently supplied the necessities of her inhabitants, but at the same time brings along with it those circumstances, which renew her strength, which fertilize her fields for future harvests, and enable her from time to time to administer again to their returning wants. In continual winter, therefore, there would be a perpetual provision for supplies of fruitfulness, without any means of exerting this power, and without any use or application of this provision, and of these supplies; and in continual summer, a perpetual exertion, without any renovation of them, a constant waste, without any sources of repair. The alternation, therefore, of these seasons, bespeaks the goodness, as well as wisdom of the Creator.

This goodness and wisdom is still farther illustrated, in the gradual return of summer and winter, through the intervening seasons of the autumn, and the spring; for, passing slowly from one extreme to the other, the influence of each is more kindly felt by the fruits and productions of the

earth, and the two extremes take place without prejudice; nay, in fact, with much advantage, to the health and comfort of mankind.

Here again we have another instance of another class of blessings derived unto mankind from the various changes, and the different situations of that amazing orb, which God hath lighted up in the heavens, “for signs and for seasons, for days and for years.”

PRAYER.

GREAT and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty, in wisdom hast thou made them all! Whither shall we go from thy spirit, or whither shall we flee from thy presence? If we ascend up into heaven thou art there—if we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead us, and thy right hand shall hold us!

O Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him—what have we wherewith to come before this high God, or what are we, that we should take upon us to address so great and glorious a Being!

We owe it to thy guardian care, that day and night, seed time, and harvest, fail not.—These blessings of thy providence thou scatterest with a liberal hand upon all thy creatures—wherever we turn our eyes, we behold the most wonderful displays of Almighty power, unerring wisdom, and never failing goodness; and every moment that we contemplate thy gracious appointments, we have

new and convincing evidence, that the God we serve is love.

O God, our unthankfulness in the midst of so many mercies ; our unfruitfulness in the midst of so many privileges ; our transgressions which we have multiplied against so many awful obligations, and against so much endearing tenderness, fill our hearts with the most painful reflections and the most distressing apprehensions, and might totally have discouraged our hope in thee, were it not for the gracious assurance in the gospel of Christ, that with thee there is mercy, and that with our God there is plenteous redemption.

DISCOURSE XXI.

ON THE GLORY OF GOD, AS MANIFESTED IN
THE HEAVENLY LUMINARIES.

PART III.

PSALM xix. 1.

The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth
his handy work.

IN the preceding Discourses on this subject, I have endeavoured to point out, first, how strikingly the glory of God is manifested in the external appearance of the heavens; secondly, in the magnitude of the heavenly bodies, and the rapidity with which they move; thirdly, in the constancy and harmony of their motions; and, fourthly, in their important influence on our welfare and our happiness. Here, our first attention having been naturally attracted by that glorious luminary, which is at once the source of our light and heat, I would now suggest a few thoughts on the benefits derived from the lunar light. Passing over those which are most obvious, and which we experience when obliged to prolong our labours beyond the decline of day, I would merely remark its extreme importance to those, whose

night continues not merely for a few hours, but who are deprived of the cheering influence of the sun, for weeks and for months. In these dreary regions of our globe, not indeed very populous, yet not altogether destitute of inhabitants, if some kind provision were not made to enlighten them, during so long an interval, it is easy to imagine in how uncomfortable a manner both themselves and their affairs would be affected. But God is the common father of mankind, and his tender mercies are over all his works. The motions of the moon therefore are wonderfully and graciously extended beyond the limits of the sun's course, that during so long an absence of that luminary, she may administer some light and comfort to these dark corners of the earth.

In illustration of the same benignity and care of God, it may also be observed here, that many other natural circumstances concur to render this situation more tolerable than we imagine it; so that although the inhabitants be involved in a much longer night, they know very little of that total darkness which so frequently characterizes ours.

It is to the moon principally that we are indebted for those constant and regular agitations of the waters, the air, and of every other fluid, whether upon the surface of the earth or above it, which preserves them from stagnating, and prevents putrefaction; the inevitable consequence of which would be, general pestilence, and universal desolation. There are tides also and from the same cause in the human body, as well as in the terraqueous globe, which have secret, but in general very beneficial influences upon the health, the comfort, and even upon the rational faculties of man.

Under this article, I will merely superadd one observation more; namely, that the division of our time marked out to us by the moon, is attended with much convenience to the affairs of men. In many instances, the period of a year, marked out by the sun, would be too long, especially considering the brevity of human life; whilst on the contrary, the period of a night, or a day, or of both united, would in many other instances be too short.

Of all the other worlds and fires that adorn the firmament of heaven, I would only make this general remark, that although they are at too great a distance to afford much light or warmth, or to have any direct influences on the earth and its inhabitants, like the influences of the sun and moon, yet, in respect even of us, they are not merely ornaments to the beautiful canopy which the hand of God hath stretched out over our heads. There are, in some parts of our globe, immense plains, without road or path, or any marks or means of distinction; some, uniformly dreary, and some, immeasurably wide; plains, where thousands of our fellow creatures have no other guide to direct them in their migrations, or in their visits from one part of the interminable prospect to another, but the stars of heaven. These celestial luminaries also, are a faithful guide to the industrious mariner, through the trackless deserts of the ocean; by them he is enabled to make the haven where he would be, and to return in safety to his far distant home, instead of being tost without knowledge, or without hope, upon the mighty waters: and it is by means of this intercourse, that the commerce and communion of mankind, which had otherwise been confined to contiguous countries, or along adjacent shores, is extended from one end of the earth unto the other. By means of this inter-

course also it is, that great improvements are derived to the whole human race: that the hearts and minds of men are opened to freer thoughts, and more humane sentiments; that their ideas of the great Creator are enlarged and ennobled; that the policy of governments, may be, hereafter, in all instances, and has been already in many instances, made better; that the manners of mankind have been refined and softened; and if some few vices and follies have extended their infection, yet the balance, upon the whole, has been much in favour of human happiness. The influence of many virtues has been increased; true religion, even the knowledge of God, and of the Son of God, has made an extensive progress; and since the way is now opened, our expectations are enlivened and our hopes confirmed, that the glorious day of salvation may be hastened, when all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ!

Such then is the utility of the heavenly luminaries, and of their various revolutions, such their connexions with the affairs of men, and their beneficial influences upon them; so loudly do they proclaim the glory of that hand by which they were formed, and by which also they are moved and supported with such inconceivable energy! They are as useful as they are magnificent, and form together one general chorus employed continually in celebrating the high praises of our God!

Before I proceed to the next and last division of this discourse, allow me to enlarge these thoughts, and to extend the conclusion that may be drawn from them in demonstration of the divine power and goodness, by the following remarks.

In the first place, all that has been said concerning the benefits which we derive from the sun, the revolutions and the changes of his course, is equally true concerning many other worlds to which he gives both light and heat, and which, like ours, are continually moving round him.

Secondly, All that has been said concerning the benefits we derive from the moon, is true concerning our earth, in respect of that luminary, which is to her, and her inhabitants, a moon, affording still greater light, and producing similar, but much more powerful influences.

Thirdly, We know that several of these worlds, which have the same common source of light and heat with ourselves, are, like our world, attended by their respective moons, which of consequence administer unto them the same benefits which we receive from ours, and which derive from the planet they attend, the same advantages, which our moon derives from the world which we inhabit.

In the fourth place, From every world throughout the universe, the heavens will make the same appearance to its inhabitants, that they make to us ; and consequently they may afford the same benefits to the inhabitants of every other world, that they do to the inhabitants of this.—Thus, O God, wherever we go, do thy works praise thee ; in all worlds do we trace the footsteps of thy wisdom, thy power, and thy goodness !

Again, the skill with which the works of God are combined together ; the harmonious connexion that is established, and has subsisted for ages, unbroken and undisturbed among all the various parts of this

immeasurable system ; the benefits that result from these connexions and dependencies, in innumerable instances so striking and so extensive, so wonderful, liberal, and gracious ; justify, nay demand this conclusion, that nothing has been made in vain ; that even, where we cannot see the utility and kindness of the works, or the dispensations of the Almighty, it is not because they are not useful, it is not because they are not kind, but because we want the discernment, the penetration, the comprehension of mind, or some other necessary assistances to discover their real character. Could we see with the eye of truth ; in every object we behold, from the dust of the ground, to the heavens on which we gaze with wonder ; from the lowest of his creatures, to those who know him best, and love him most, and bear the nearest likeness to him ; we should see it written in eternal characters, that God is power, and light, and love !

In the ear of reason, there are ten thousand salutations proceeding from ten thousand times ten thousand living creatures, congratulating the race of men that they live under the government of so great, so kind, and so good a master.—“ Rejoice then in the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name ! ”—Rejoice with trembling, O ye sons of men, and think what returns ye can render unto him for all his benefits !

In the last place, I would just add another observation on this subject ; the heavens reveal to us still more of the glory of God, if we consider how wonderfully and how kindly their influences and revolutions, are adapted to the frame, and to the wants of man.

Here I would by no means be understood to insinuate that the heavens were made for this purpose only, that the sun was created for no other end than that we might be warmed and enlightened by his beams, or that the moon was created for no other purpose, than to cheer the darkness of our night; or the stars, with no other view, than to entertain the eye of man and direct him in his course.—The whole race of mortals, all that have lived, and all that ever will live, are, in the universe of God, as a few grains of sand to the sea shore!—Let us not conceive that these glorious luminaries have not far wider connexions, and more extensive influences, and more important services. But, if amidst these, if amidst innumerable other purposes; if amidst innumerable other services, immeasurable in their extent, and unspeakable in their importance, the race of mortals has not been overlooked or forgotten by the great Lord of all; if, whilst these luminaries are accommodating their situation and their revolutions to so many nobler ends, they are at the same time so accommodated to the powers and the wants of man, as if created for him alone; this surely is a striking argument of his glory, who, whilst he attends to the greatest objects, overlooks not the smallest; who knows how to harmonize the interests of all, so that there shall be no discord or interference; and whose paternal care and tender mercies are extended even to the least and the most unworthy of his creatures!

Of this observation I shall produce but one short instance, which will be sufficient fully to justify the remark, and may lead our thoughts to many similar reflections.

It is obvious to observe, that great as is the distance between this earth, and the source of its light and heat, it is not too great for the faculties or the exigencies of its inhabitants. At a greater distance, as our globe is now constituted, we should have had but a little, comfortless, twilight day; the obscurity and coldness of which would have essentially interfered with the business, security, and health of man: we should have had but a faint, cheerless summer, too weak to infuse life and gladness either into the animal or vegetable creation; and if not wholly insufficient to raise the fruits of the earth into vegetation, at least not sufficient to prepare, and to mature them: and our nights and winter would have been exceedingly noxious and severe. On the other hand, had the distance been less, though the winter and the night might have been in some degree comfortable, yet the summer and the day would have burnt with insupportable heat, and have blazed with unsufferable splendour.

I would now close the whole, with the following short practical reflections.

In the first place; We may learn hence by what means to improve our knowledge of God and of his glory; viz. by a pious contemplation of his creation, and a serious attention to his providence. To Christians, the word of God is a sacred rule of duty; and his word commends us to his works, if we mean to grow in divine knowledge. The beautiful and sublime imagery of the ancient prophets, prove them to have been devout observers of the wonders of creation; and indeed there cannot be a stronger argument of insensibility and indevotion, than to live without God, without a su-

preme reverence of his glories ; without attention to his presence, when all things around, above, within, and beneath us, testify that an Almighty hand created, and an all-gracious arm perpetually supports them !

Continually in the temple of the Lord shall I be, and habitually unmindful of the divinity that resides there ? Shall the Psalmist celebrate the beauties and the pleasures of a little local temple built by human art, the fruit of man's device, and which long ago has perished as its founder perished ; shall the Psalmist celebrate a little local earth-built temple, because it was consecrated unto God, and because his worship was performed there, and shall our souls pay no regard, lend no attention, to that infinite and eternal temple, whose builder, and whose maker is God ? Look up to the innumerable worlds that revolve around us—with what nobler ideas, and sublimer sentiments ought not we to adopt the language of the king of Israel, saying unto him whose transcendent glory they manifest, "O how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, our King and our God !"

Nor is the pious contemplation of the works of God recommended only by the example of the Psalmist : Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, was a studious observer, as well as a zealous preacher of divine providence, and a devout contemplator of his Father's works. If a sparrow fall to the ground, it is not without his heavenly Father ; if the fowls of the air are feeding in his sight, they are feeding on his Father's bounty ; if the lilies of the field adorn the scene that is before him, it is the hand of God that clothed them, and perfumed them with an odour and a splendour which no efforts of

human art, which no sumptuousness of imperial magnificence, can equal.

A more rational entertainment no man can devise; a more edifying employment no man can conceive, than the serious and religious study of the works and ways of God. It is an entertainment that may be enjoyed in some considerable degree by the lowest capacities, if there be but the ability to observe and to reflect. It is an employment that may be made consistent with every other occupation, at any hour, and in any scene.

Again. To survey every living object we behold, as the creature of him who made ourselves, and the various events of life as proceeding from the decree of God; to consider them in this light, will consecrate the most trivial occurrences into a sacrifice of praise; and raise those pleasures, which had otherwise been no more than mere animal sensations, or mere amusements of the imagination, into the noblest, the most edifying, the most satisfactory, and the most worthy, of which humanity is capable.

The Psalmist spake nothing more than the language of nature and experience, when he said; "that the works of the Lord are great to all those by whom they are sought out; giving pleasure."—The devout contemplation of them exceedingly expands and improves the mind; corrects the desire for all baser pleasures; and while it renders us less vulnerable to the temptations of this present state, we are thereby fitted and prepared for the more noble employments, and spiritual attainments of that which is to come.—By means such as these, the interests of piety cannot fail to be promoted; for

what heart, accustomed attentively to contemplate the immensity of creation, can be so insensible, as not to stand in awe of him who is punctually obeyed by ten thousand times ten thousand worlds; and to whom the universe, and every being in it, owes its existence, and who has every heart and every hand in his controul? What soul is there so obdurate, as not to feel, with the most fervent emotions of gratitude and love, that benevolence of God, that is as wide as infinitude itself, and as stable as his own eternity? What soul is there so fearful and so discontented, as not to resign its apprehensions and solitudes, and commit itself with cheerful confidence to that God, who, if his works and his providence may be trusted, knows all the wants of all his subjects, and pities the distresses even of the meanest creature he has formed?

What is there that can dilate our hearts into purer, or more fervent sentiments of charity and love, than to range through the boundless ocean of our Creator's mercies?—What is there so favourable to the sentiments of genuine humility, as to send out our thoughts to the universe of God, in comparison of which, the world we inhabit is but as a particle of dust, and ourselves as an atom of that dust.

Lastly. From what has been said upon this subject we may form a probable conjecture, concerning a part, at least, of our employment, in a future state of perfect virtue and of perfect happiness.

Here we see little of the works of God; yet the little that we do see conveys to us the purest and most sublime pleasure. We perceive an immensi-

ty behind, undiscovered and unknown, except that such an immensity exists.—What more probable, than that it should form a part of our future recompense and happiness, in union with each other, to trace the Creator's footsteps, in this and other worlds, and to pursue the manifestations of his glories, through immensity, and to eternity, without limit and without end!

A nobler, or more pleasurable employment, we can hardly desire or conceive—yet a nobler and more pleasurable employment we have reason to hope for, and expect;—what means the transporting promise that we shall then see God? not “through a glass darkly;” not only by reflection in the mirror of his works, but immediately, and even face to face!—Blessed state! Extatick expectation! Who would lose it! Who, my friends, would not earnestly “press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus!”

PRAYER.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the foundations of the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God, and thy dominion is from generation to generation. Thou art the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever!

O Lord, when we consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; when we behold the spacious firmament which thou hast stretched out above us; when we see the sun which thou hast appointed to rule the day, shining in his strength; or the moon which thou hast directed to keep watch by night,

walking in her brightness; when we attempt to count that starry host with which the heavens are adorned; our hearts are overpowered with the most lively and awful conviction, that thou art great, and thy name great, and that the understanding of our God is infinite!

Raise us, we beseech thee, to that happy state of mind, and keep us for ever in it, in which it shall be our chief delight to do thy will. May we be continually aspiring after new improvements in the Christian character; may we never think that we are already perfect; but forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward to those that are before, may we press forward towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus.—As we draw nearer unto heaven, may we become more heavenly minded, more like those pure and holy spirits who reside there, and more meet to be partakers with them, in their employments and their happiness.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, God only wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen!

DISCOURSE XXII.

ON THE USE AND IMPROVEMENT TO BE DERIVED FROM SEVERE ILLNESS.

JOHN xi. 4.

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.*

IT is the duty of every Christian Minister, for it is the duty of every man, to extract whatever good he can extract, from every thing that befalls either himself or others. All the dispensations of Divine Providence contain in them the wisest instructions, and may be made productive of the kindest influences, to promote our best interests, to enhance our present consolations, and to enrich our heavenly inheritance. We cannot neglect them, but to our injury; who then "is a wise man among you," let him show forth his wisdom in strenuous exertion to derive from every afflictive event, the important counsel it is capable of suggesting, and to profit from the wholesome discipline which it may administer.

You all know the occasion that first led my thoughts to the portion of Scripture I have read to you.—You also, "are in the body;" perpetually exposed to sickness, pain, and death; and it was

* Composed and preached on recovery from a nervous fever, in the year 1783, in which the Author had been confined to his bed several weeks, and his life had been despaired of many days.

my desire to assist you in the just improvement of such dangers and of such deliverances as I had myself experienced, to the melioration of your hearts, and therefore, to the honour of your Maker.

It may be, that you have had experience of such situations, and if so, it is an incumbent duty, tenderly to cherish the remembrance, both of the affliction, and of the salvation; for they still remain with you in their results, as talents to be acknowledged, occupied, and improved.—It is possible that you have not yet experienced such situations; but it is by no means improbable, that hereafter you may; and in that case, beforehand to have reflected on the benefits to be derived from them, and the improvements to which they may be made subservient, will enable you to derive those benefits with greater certainty, and in more abundance, and to make that improvement with greater accuracy, and with more acceptance and success, when the hour of trial shall come.—Such previous meditation, upon subjects so interesting, properly pursued, and repeated at well-chosen intervals, will render us more attentive to the actual impressions when they do arrive; more able to apprehend and feel the general dictates and demands of such visitations, and more capable of distinguishing those influences produced by them, to which we ought to yield our hearts, from those, which it equally behoves us to resist.

From these motives, and with these objects in view, my thoughts were led to the text before us; it is not my intention to consider it as connected with the history of Lazarus, but only to observe to you;

First, How those sicknesses which are not unto death, are in themselves, and of necessity, to the glory of God, and

Secondly, How the real Christian, whilst he rejoices in these necessary displays of divine glory, will exert his own voluntary endeavours also, that both his dangers, and his deliverances, may redound still further to the glory of God.

In the first place; Those sicknesses that terminate not in death, are of necessity to the glory of God. I mean not to assert, that there is any thing peculiar in them to the exclusion of those sicknesses which do terminate in death: for every thing is to the glory of God; sickness as well as health; pain, as well as pleasure; death, as well as life; evil, as well as good; all are to his glory. Throughout the whole universe of God, there is not a being that exists, nor an event that comes to pass, which is not to his glory: that is to say, there is not in the whole universe, a being, or an event, which, to a mind capable of comprehending the nature, the causes, and the purposes of its existence, together with the connexions, the influences, and the results; which does not strikingly exhibit the perfections of its Author, and dispose every such spectator, to all the blessed sentiments and genuine expressions, of veneration, love, and joy.

Placing our subject in this light, we can hardly fail immediately to perceive some rays of the divine glory in those sicknesses that are not unto death, and it will not be difficult so to direct our meditations, as to open wider views of the divine excellencies and more abundant causes of devout affection in these visitations of God's providence.

Go into the sick man's chamber, you will find him, it may be, extended on his bed; not in soft and gentle slumbers, the restorers of exhausted nature, but tossing to and fro, in painful and tumultuous vigils; or bound down in unconquerable death-like somnolency. You may find there, perhaps, even in the noon of life, the manly vigour, which, not many days ago, was actively and ardently engaged in innocent, honourable, and useful occupations, sunk into oppressive languor, or dissolved, even into infant weakness; heaving the breath that is not to be reached; ineffectually attempting even the easiest exertions—the springs of life, which lately flowed with such force and freedom, baffled in their course: with embarrassed, interrupted, laborious, failing efforts, struggling to keep up the vital current, and intimating, that they cannot do it long! You might find there, perhaps, the sensations which lately were so acute and lively, slow and obscure, and nearly extinct.—The ideas that were lately so clear and vivid, broken, confused, and blotted out. The understanding, that lately was employed with just discernment in the pursuit of truth, or in the business of the world, confounded, deranged, distracted; one while overpowered by vast, and dark, and awful imaginations; another while, dissipated in the lightest, wildest, and most extravagant conceptions; its owner knowing nothing of the scene around him, unacquainted with his best friends, and a stranger in his own house!

From such circumstances, the next step is usually into the grave: yet sights like these are sometimes seen in sicknesses that are not unto death. Who does not perceive in them the demonstrations of that awful Power that can stop the

wheels of life whenever seemeth to him good ; that can crush the firmest fabrick ; that can blight the fairest prospects ; that can darken the brightest day ; that can keep us living, and, in any degree he pleases, sensible to the anguish of such life ; in the midst of dying circumstances that can pain us at every avenue of our bodies, and distress us in every faculty of our minds. How fearful is that Power ! how necessary is its friendship ! how forcibly do such scenes inculcate it upon us, to consider our dependence, and to own it, and to stand in awe of God ?

But, though the language which such a situation addresses to the ear of reason, is full of awful and terrifick images, yet it is not terroure only that it inspires. When we cast our eye into scenes of pain and sickness, if we see not there so much of the goodness, as of the power of God, yet we catch some glimpses of the divine benignity : for it can hardly fail to meet our thoughts, that these are not the ordinary circumstances of mankind. If sometimes, when need be, we are for a season, now and then in heaviness, yet how much more numerous are our days of health, activity, and joy ? The remembrance of these happy days may well silence discontent, and enkindle gratitude on the bed of pain and languishing ; and even there, the well formed mind can derive comfort to itself, and feel its joy in God, from the reflection, that at all times the sick are comparatively few ; the great body of mankind, easy, vigorous, and happy. To an imagination that is at all at liberty to contemplate them, scenes of sickness and mortality suggest their contraries, vivacity and health. While the cloud is hanging over you, it may intercept, from the spot you occupy, some rays of the divine benignity, and may cool

your accustomed triumph in the government of God : yet even then, if you will extend your view beyond your chamber, or your house, you will see all around you, a wide and cheering prospect ; chequered it may be with here and there a cloud, like that which is passing over you, but for the most part, enlightened and enlivened with the brightest splendours of divine liberality and goodness.

Such contemplations even sickness can suggest, to alleviate the weight with which it presses on us, and to glorify that God, to whose grace, our visitation, and pain, and languor, are to be ascribed ; who apprehends no attainder of his character from any thing he commands or does ; whose own language of his own conduct is, “ I form the light and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things.”

In this manner, and in many other respects which it were easy to enumerate, does sickness, whatever be its termination, whether death, or renewed life, glorify God its author. And if affliction glorifies him, how much more, deliverance from affliction ? If sickness is the means or the occasion of exhibiting unto us the excellencies of his nature and his character ; to our feeble eyes and contracted views, how much more directly and more manifestly are they displayed, in the healing of our diseases, and the renovation of our frame.

When, in the example of a friend, we contemplate the progress of disease, advancing from one degree of power to another, till at length, nature, no longer able to maintain the unequal conflict, sinks down oppressed and overwhelmed ; our heart-aches grow with the growing danger ; till, at last, perhaps, our

faith fails us : While we speak in vain to the ear that hears not, or the understanding that apprehends not ; while we look with wishful anguish on the pallid countenance, and watch with anxious solicitude the ebbing breath ; it seems, as if there were but a moment to the fatal termination. While indeed, there is life, there is hope ; but in a state like this, we dare not indulge it.—By what unknown springs should that oppressive load be shook off ? by what means can that retiring spirit be recalled ? —What a journey ! long, insupportable, impracticable ? through all the stages that led to this awful scene, what a journey ! How impossible to travel back again, to the height from which he is fallen !—If, notwithstanding all this fear, and doubt, and unbelief, that height be again regained ; if the transformation actually takes place to which our hopes durst not, or, perhaps, could not extend ; if the dying friend does not die ; if, returning from the grave, where he was going down, he be re-invested in his strength, his reason, and activity ; his connexions, about to be dissolved, kindly renewed, and those offices, by him to have been done no more, resumed ; in reflecting upon such events, how impossible is it for the thoughtful mind to overlook what they exhibit of his glory, who is the God of our lives, the length of our days, and the dispenser of all our circumstances !

What power ! to commission the ministers of death, to bring down their victim to the very edge of the grave, and in the moment when their triumph is about to be complete, to controul their operations, and reverse them ! What skill ! to lay no less, and yet to lay no more upon a feeble mortal than what he is able to bear. What wisdom ! so exactly to accommodate the nature, the force, the extent, the con-

tinuance of disease, to the power of sustaining, resisting, and surmounting it, as that it shall stop short of nothing but the extinction of the one last spark of life, and shall do all but extinguish it!

What kindness! to restore to endeared connexions, to enlivened hopes, to improved comforts, to accustomed services, to unfinished projects, to new opportunities and increased motives of cultivating the affections of the Christian character, of adding to the treasures we have laid up in heaven, and of abounding still more and more, in all good works!

To whom are resurrections such as these to be ascribed? Whose power, whose wisdom, whose goodness, do they display? Shall we impute them to that self-rectifying principle which shows itself so manifestly in every part of nature, and not least in the human frame? But who gave to this exquisite machine that self-rectifying power, and who is it wards off that fatal period, that insurmountable disorder, which this principle cannot rectify or survive? Shall they then be imputed to the anxious and unwearied care of affectionate and faithful friends? Whose gift are friends? in whose hands are their breath? By whom are their views directed, and their powers supported? Who places them upon the scene in which we need their help, and at the time in which we need it? Shall these resurrections be ascribed to the assiduity, fidelity, and skill of the physician? To whom does he owe his faculties, and the preservation of them? From whose storehouses is he furnished with the remedies that he applies? By whose kind disposals is it that in the moment of critical necessity he is present to apply them, in number, weight, and measure? God, my friends, God is all in all; without him no-

thing is. 'Who,' says the prophet, 'who is he, that sayeth and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?' All other agents are his instruments, of his making, and of his employing.

The voluntary instruments of his mercy are undoubtedly entitled to our gratitude, and our hearts are unable to withhold it. While from just and proper principles these agents accomplish the purposes of divine Providence, they manifest their own worth, at the same time that they contribute to the display of the divine excellencies. But surely, whatever wisdom, power, or goodness, the works of nature or the events of life exhibit, they must be properly and peculiarly to his glory, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things. In tracing the causes of events, how can our reason rest till it reach him who is the Father of our spirits, and the former of our bodies, and the conciliator of our friendships; the light of every understanding, and the strength of every arm?

Let us see God, my friends, wherever he is; i. e. in every atom of the universe, and in every event of life. How joyful is the thought, that in him we live, and move, and have our being! What a comfort in the prospect of long continued life; what a source of firmness and tranquillity in the view of impending death!

Wherever he reveals his glory, whether in our own circumstances, or in those of others, thither let our eyes be turned; let our contemplations dwell upon the scene, till we have imbibed all the instructions it unfolds, and conceived all the salutary sentiments it is capable of inspiring.

If pain and sickness speak to us of the awful sovereignty, or suggest to us the general benignity of God; if they enliven the conviction of our own impotence and dependence, with that of his patience and his power; though they be our own pains and sicknesses, or theirs who are dear to us as ourselves; while they are present, let us not turn away from the contemplation of them; and when they are over, let us not relax our exertions to retain a just and lively sense of the salutary impression.

If redemption from the hand of the grave bespeaks the power, and skill, and mercy, of its author, in such events let us accustom ourselves to observe and to consider the striking exhibition of divine grace: let us compare the renewed, with the expiring man, and suffer not ourselves to neglect such monuments of the divine glory, even though it were in the instance of a stranger or an enemy.

The sicknesses which do terminate in death, no less than those from which we recover, no doubt are also to the glory of God. When that event is past, when we view it in its true light, and from the proper point of view, we shall see, I trust, and triumph in the conviction, that our death was to the glory of God.

In the mean time, if, through the disadvantages of our present circumstances; or the imperfection of our present faculties, we see, or seem to see, more of God in the light of life, than in the valley of the shadow of death; in the restoration to interrupted duties and enjoyments, than in sable funerals and silent graves; hard must be the heart which has experienced such deliverances, and conceived from them no devout affection.

For the present, to conclude. Let us keep a serious eye upon the current of divine Providence, and upon every event that we meet with or befalls us, let us inquire what it has to say of our duty, or of God's glory. Let fidelity, gratitude, and cheerful confidence in God, sanctify our character. Whether he wounds, or heals; whether, he sends us to the grave, or calls us back from thence; let us say, "even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."—When the hand of God lies heavy on you, still remember that it is God's hand; and when he lifts you up again, let your songs ever be of him, and your prayer unto the God of your lives!*

PRAAYER.

O THOU, who killest and makest alive; who woundest, and who healest, accept the devout thanksgivings of those whom thou hast recalled from the gates of death, and brought back this day into thine house to serve and magnify thee, their preserver and deliverer!

It was thine hand that humbled, and that laid them low; and it was the same Almighty arm that

* The above Sermon, and the two following, unlike the others contained in this volume, not being suited to general use, the Editor could not, in like manner, add a prayer for general use. She has however, as it happened to be inserted at the end of the Sermon, subjoined that, with which the Author closed this service, apprehending that there are minds, to whom it will be interesting; and she has also, with like views, added the psalm selected by him on the same occasion. It was not usual with him to keep a diary, but the date is here subjoined, viz. February 23, 1783, to which is added the following Memorandum. "The first time of preaching, after a very long illness, from the midst of October, perhaps from an earlier date, but *laid aside* from all publick service from the middle of November last. Great comfort and much delight of heart, in the duties of this day."

rescued them from the impending danger. It is having obtained help from God that they continue hitherto, and of his great mercy that they are so far restored to the full enjoyment of reason, of health, and of strength !

Go on, O Lord, if it be thy will, to perfect that which thou hast begun, and grant that while their days are prolonged, they may be prolonged in usefulness and comfort.

Thou, O God, hast all hearts in thine hands ; hear their earnest supplications, that no time may impair their sense, either of the deliverance or of the affliction. May both have their proper influence upon their temper and demeanour ; may they live to him by whom they live, and may their song ever be of thee, and their prayer unto the God of their lives.

THE PSALM.

In life's first dawn, my tender frame
Was thy continual care ;
Long ere I could pronounce thy name,
Or breathe an infant's prayer.

Tho' reason with my stature grew,
How feeble was its aid,
How little of my God I knew,
How oft from thee I stray'd !

Around my path what dangers rose,
What snares through all the road !
What could have sav'd me from my foes,
But an all-powerful God ?

Life has hung trembling on a breath,
And thine unfailing love
Hath snatch'd me from the stroke of death,
And bid my fears remove.

How many blessings, to thy throne
Have rais'd my thankful eye !
How many pass'd almost unknown,
Or unregarded, by !

DISCOURSE XXIII.

ON THE USE AND IMPROVEMENT TO BE DERIVED FROM SEVERE ILLNESS.

PART II.

JOHN xi. 4.

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.

You have already seen, in the first place, how those sicknesses of ours, which are not unto death, are in themselves, of necessity for the glory of God; you have seen, how to every intelligent observer, they do necessarily, and of themselves reveal it. We come now,

In the second place, to observe, how the good man, while he rejoices in these necessary displays of the divine glory, will exert his own voluntary endeavours also, that his dangers as well as deliverances, may redound still farther to the glory of God.

The good man who has experienced such afflictions, and such deliverances, will not be satisfied with what the events themselves unavoidably exhibit of his makers glory, his spirit will not rest, until he has been the active and voluntary instrument of declaring it; his heart will prompt him upon this, as

upon every just occasion, to present unto God the sacrifice of praise.

God is glorified by the cheerfulness of the obedience which his servants yield to him, and by the fidelity with which they improve his talents. The good man therefore, as in every scene he will be studious to maintain such a temper and demeanour as shall prove that he thinks well of the dispensations of Providence; so, in his reflections upon them, he will be studious to extract, to lay up in his remembrance and to inculcate on his heart, every consideration afforded by them, to engage, to encourage and support him in the culture of all good affections, and the practice of all good works.

The christian cannot rise from the bed on which he lately was expiring, but his heart will vent itself in unfeigned praises and thanksgivings unto God. If that last vital spark which was well nigh extinguished, be lighted up again into clear and just conceptions; can such a transformation pass upon him, and his heart conceive no gratitude, his tongue keep back all praise? shocked at the idea of the indecorum and the baseness of such an omission, the well formed mind will rejoice in God, that it has not thus to abhor itself. It will feel, that thanks and praise are due for the deliverance, and due for the affliction too. He will not despise the chastening of the Lord: knowing its general intention to be kind, he will inquire into its especial meaning. Persuaded, that it is only, "if need be, that he is in heaviness;" that "God chasteneth not for his pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness," the Christian will look back with satisfaction on the trials he has undergone; and duly humbled under the mighty hand of

God, will be sincerely thankful that he has not been exempt from the salutary discipline of life. If "in the midst of judgment God hath remembered mercy, and if mercy hath rejoiced against judgment," his gratitude will be enkindled into intenser ardour; his joy in the providence of God will be more lively; and those cords of divine love, which unite him to that infinitely wise and tender Parent, will be more straitly drawn, and more firmly bound upon his heart.

It is good for a living man to know what dying is: he may have reason to rejoice in the visitation that set him within sight of death, within feeling of that awful situation, as long as he shall live, and longer. There is no mystery in this language; it needs no illustration; all here present, I trust, will readily understand, and assent to it; and will be at least equally ready to concede, that life is good; that long life is an unspeakable blessing, and a blessing which it is the duty of every man to seek. It is more talents, and affords more improvements; it is more seed time, and may yield a greater harvest; it is more discipline, and may lead to superiour perfection. The good man, though he will cheerfully consent to death, when the will of God is so, may yet wisely wish, and prudently endeavour, to live as long as life can be improved by him. A protracted service, much usefulness, many trials, a long continued education, if they demand much, do however, promise much, and may conduct to a more honourable and distinguished recompense. Can the good man's heart be sensible of this, and feel no grateful exultations in returning life; in extended prospects, and reviving hopes? It cannot be; in all things God will be glorified by him; he will cling to him when he

wounds, and triumph in him, when he heals. Again,

In respect to any visitation of his providence, God is not duly glorified, to the extent of our ability or of our duty, merely by our devout acknowledgments: nor will the good man's heart be satisfied, until he has applied himself to the religious and moral uses, which the visitations he has experienced may afford to the glory and the praise of God.

It is to the honour of the King, eternal and immortal, that his servants should occupy his talents, and not neglect them; that the subjects of his moral government should concur with, and not counteract him in the events and purposes of his dispensations. Whilst they thereby promote their own excellence, they "show forth his praise;" and wherever there is a sincere desire "that God may be glorified in us;" there will be, in that mind, a just attention to his providences, and a serious solicitude that his purposes may not be defeated, but accomplished fully, and in their whole extent. The Christian therefore, will not forget the sicknesses that issue not in death: he will often recollect the scenes through which he passed to the borders of the grave, and in his return from it; and will cherish in his remembrance the impressions that they made, the convictions they enforced, and the sentiments they excited; he will frequently renew the traces they have left upon his heart; that whatever advantages he possessed not the power to extract from them, while they were present with him, he may be enabled, by repeated retrospects, to obtain, and to carry with him through the whole of his future life.

Let me be permitted to illustrate and exemplify this conduct in a few plain and obvious instances.

Christian, if thou hast ever been within sight of death, whence, in that hour of trial, didst thou derive thy firmness and composure? What was it that enabled thee to yield thyself with tranquillity and complacency to the will of God? It was thy conscience—thy conscience was thy stay. And hast thou never since reflected on the cordial comfort, which in that hour of darkness it administered? Dost thou never ask thyself what could then have tempted thee to part with it? Once more, at least, thou wilt have need of such a friend—dost thou never impress it on thy heart, not to part with thine integrity, though thou shouldst die? Hast thou never charged thyself to take thy good conscience with thee, when thou shalt next go into the valley of affliction, and the shades of death?—If not, thou hast not acted according to thy character, thy profession, thy obligation, or thy interest.

Dost thou remember, Christian, with what compassion, in those scenes of death, thou reflectedst on their case, who were without God, and without hope there? How would thy heart have ached and trembled, if thou hadst not trusted that God would walk with thee, through death's dark valley?—In what light did the divine favour then appear? of what unutterable moment!—of what inestimable value!—Dost thou remember, what a wretch thou hadst been without it?—How much was it endeared to thee! how much was thy sense of its infinite importance quickened and enlarged?

Christian, hast thou never seriously retraced these sentiments and convictions?—never in imagination measured back thy steps into that awful, yet edifying situation, by which such salutary feelings were thus invigorated and magnified? Dying, in thine own conception, were thy sentiments so just and lively?—returned again to life, is thy heart grown cold and insensible? Are things eternal thus depreciated and injured? In neglect of such cares and exercises of the mind, have its sentiments undergone so deplorable a revolution?—Surely, if it be so, this is not grateful, it is not reasonable, it is not christian, it is not wise. God has a claim upon you for better honour; your own souls have a title to more attention: The friends who love you will regret, that such advantages to enliven, and to keep for ever lively, your sense of the divine favour, should be lost upon you: and if they are wise, as well as kind, while they lament your folly, they will tremble for your safety. Again,

The near neighbourhood of death is a station in which the vanity of this world is most clearly seen and felt, and the Christian, whose sincere desire it is to honour God, by the just application and improvement of all his dispensations to him, will avail himself of the soberer ideas of that hour, to correct the more forcible impressions, the gayer sentiments, and the inordinate elations which we are too ready to admit from the influences of this world, when it stands as it were, nearer to us, in the time of our health, prosperity, and hope.

Christian, it is likely that you have sometimes had reason to regret the force with which things, seen and temporal, struck you, and to lament the faint and ineffectual impression of things invisible

and eternal. In an hour of serious reflection, you see danger to your good conscience and your good character, and perhaps have actually suffered detriment from your inability, or your inattention, to keep the proper balance between sense and faith. In this scene of discipline, where the world, and the things of it are perpetually pressing on our senses, incessantly soliciting our attention, and unavoidably occupying our care, such dangers may return again. You would not be repeatedly betrayed by any pleasures, or honours, or interests of this world to disgrace your Christian character: *That*, you know, would neither glorify God, nor comfort you. You would be provided, as well as may be, against all seduction and surprise. Send back your thoughts then to the hour in which you deemed yourselves in the near neighbourhood of death. Place yourselves in the same scene again, and take up again the ideas and affections that were then stirring in your hearts. At that time, were your affections to the world very warm and keen? Did it then appear to you of such vast importance? Did you then congratulate yourselves on the pleasures you had enjoyed, on the honours you had worn, on the acquisitions you had made? What thought you then of the anxiety and eagerness with which the things of this world are pursued? What thought you of the sacrifices that are so often made for the things of this world? What thought you of the differences of the circumstances of mankind? Did it then seem to you of any mighty moment in what rank or in what condition the human traveller should perform a journey, so rapid, and so short? Wealth and poverty, affliction and prosperity, had lost much of their distinction in your mind; and from the station which you then occupied, the eminences and the vales of life were reduced to a level

in your view. To you the important thing was, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you had had your conversation in the world."

And, when in the secret of your breast, your heart poured out its warmest wishes for those you love, the things of this world were too light to prompt your intercessions; and your prayers for them were, that their souls might be in health, and prosper. To undervalue this world, is ingratitude; to overvalue it, is imprudence; to think justly of it, is truth, and it is duty too. In this respect to honour God, to judge of this world as he judges of it, and to feel ourselves affected towards it as he would have us feel, it is needful that we sometimes withdraw ourselves whither its alluring flatteries will not follow us; where the illusion of a vain imagination will not impose upon us; where the connexion of this world with the world to come, will forcibly break in upon us, and will cause itself to be attended to, and laid to heart. It is in *that* connexion that its value and importance lies; and whatever tends to give justice or vivacity to our conceptions of that connexion, though they be scenes of sickness and of death, are scenes in which our thoughts should be often conversant. To place ourselves in imagination there, may essentially serve us: to have occasion of observing what the dying think of this world, is an advantage for the adjustment of our affections with respect to it, greatly to be wished for; but to have had the superiour advantage of feeling for ourselves the impressions of such a situation,—of knowing experimentally, how the world appears to those who have finished their career in it,—is, in this view, a favour of divine Providence which it becomes us

devoutly to acknowledge, and which it behoves us faithfully to improve.

Of that man on whom the Providence of God has let in such striking views of the vanity of this world and its pursuits, it is most reasonably expected, that he should possess and cultivate the spiritual mind: surely his affections towards the world should be calm and temperate; no passion which at all respects it, keen or ardent, except his zeal to improve to the uttermost, the period of discipline and education.—Thus he will do honour to the conviction that he has felt of the vanity of present things; and when he stands again upon the border of eternity, he will look behind him, with modest satisfaction, and before him, with humble hope. Again,

The visitations of which we speak, that have brought near to death, and have not terminated in it, will be applied by the wise and good man, in his reflections on the feelings of such times, to reduce the over-weenings of self-esteem, and therefore to quicken him in the culture of the Christian character, and to animate his diligence in all the business of life.

There is no scene so humbling as the bed of death. In that solemn light, which the near approach of judgment and eternity sheds around us, infirmities are apt to look like iniquities; in that awful hour that enlivens the desire, and takes from him for ever the power, to repair them, there is danger that the good man's errors and failings should rise up in his imagination to the magnitude of faults and crimes. When the end of life is just upon us, it is natural, it is scarcely avoidable, to

compare its attainments with its length. Short must be the life, or great the attainments, which upon such a comparison, at such an hour, shall not hold forth to the comparer, much cause of humiliation and regret; opportunities unobserved, neglected, or declined.—Talents, though not misapplied, nor hid, nor unimproved; yet improved but feebly, coldly, and remissly, are not desirable attendants on a dying bed; no self-esteem is to be derived from them; in their aspect there is nothing pleasing; there is nothing soothing, nothing elevating in the language which they hold. Dejection, it may be expected, will accompany them, and it is well, if they do not cast some transient and uncomfortable clouds, on “good hope through grace.”

Christian, thy heart is no stranger to such sentiments; in the hour of devout reflection, how often have they intruded on thy repose! Humility is of the very essence of thy character, and when, drawing nigh unto thy Maker in acts of religious contemplation, or of pious homage, it is natural that self-abasement should spring up within thy heart—it may even be, that his “dread falleth on thee,” and that “his excellency, maketh thee afraid!”—Yet, I may appeal to you, that your humiliations were never more sincere, your self-esteem never lowlier, the sense of your imperfections never more awakening, and your sense of the divine excellencies more overpowering, if you have ever been there, than on the bed of death.—With what affection was it that you then looked through impending death, to instant judgment, and an opening eternity? It was not terror;—terror was forbidden by divine mercy; it was not confidence, for confidence was repressed by the awful presence in which you were about to appear:—conscious of your own littleness and unwor-

thiness, did you cast yourself wholly on the goodness and mercy of God? Sentiments like these become a creature such as man towards infinite perfection and unspotted holiness, and are highly favourable to Christian diligence and zeal; yet who that has ever felt the tender anguish intermixed with them, would prepare more of it against another hour of serious self-communion, or of approaching death?—Who, that on the bed of death, has compared himself with his great Exemplar; his own conduct with the law of God; his temper, with God's discipline, and his attainments, with his privileges; who, that from such a situation has ever dwelt upon the painful retrospect of his own miscarriages and imperfections, can ever more think highly of himself; or ever more want motives in the future, to repair the past?

Christians, cherish the remembrance of every scene and of every event which may have reminded you how far you have fallen short of the standard, to which your duty, your honour, your interest, and your comfort required you to aspire.

While they are present with you, yield your hearts to the penitential sentiments which they awaken, for this is one act of honour unto God; but forget not, that in respect of such visitations, you have not rendered to him *all* the glory due unto his name, till you have pursued the dictates and demands of such penitential sentiments, into the faithful correction, and the diligent improvement of your hearts and lives.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

ON THE USE AND IMPROVEMENT TO BE DERIVED FROM SEVERE ILLNESS.

PART III.

JOHN xi. 4.

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.

You have already seen in what respect and in what manner the sicknesses which are not unto death, are subservient to the glory of God.

If we can trust either the judgment of our own reason, or the proofs of it exhibited in the gospel, benignity and kindness are the highest honours of the divine character; and therefore, to study the resemblance of God in these amiable excellencies, is to glorify the Lord our Maker; and it is manifest to observe, that scenes of oppressive sickness and of impending death, are capable of yielding much assistance to the mind disposed to avail itself of the advantage, to enliven and invigorate the kind affections of the human heart.

Friendless and forlorn beyond the common lot of men, must be his, to whom, when such visitations have deprived him of all self-assistance and

support, they afford not great occasion for much gratitude to others. Ungenerous and contracted, not yet emancipated from the debasing influence of selfish and envious passions, must that heart be, which, amidst its own dangers and afflictions, can find no congratulations to present to those who are secure and happy: and still harder and more unimpressible the spirit, which, whilst it feels its own absolute need of pity and assistance, has no compassion to bestow upon its brethren in affliction.

It is the natural tendency of such situations to invite reflection, to lead our thoughts to those who are in like circumstances, and to draw out our hearts towards them. To feel the anguish of affliction, from whatever cause it may arise, naturally enlivens and magnifies our ideas of the contrary situation; and, as in the selfish mind it may give an indecent ardour and importunity to its good wishes for its own deliverance; in the heart where liberality of sentiment prevails, it will excite a livelier sympathy with those who possess what itself has lost, and warmer wishes that they may prize such blessings duly, and enjoy them long. Acts of kindness are never felt so sensibly, nor received so gratefully, as when they are indeed wanted; they are seldom lost when they are bestowed on such occasions and in such circumstances. If therefore, sickness, pain, and danger, have a tendency, whilst they are present, to enliven the sentiments of gratitude, congratulation, and compassion, we may be aided by the serious recollection and renewed consideration of such scenes, and of their more immediate influence, to attain to permanent and progressive improvement, in these elements and components of Christian charity.

Do you understand this doctrine? I see no reason to apprehend either that you do not understand, or that you doubt it. But perhaps you may conceive it better, and be more confirmed in the persuasion, that in this respect God may be glorified in our sufferings, if, having passed through such scenes of suffering and danger, you will recollect what you thought and what you felt, whilst you were in them.

Christian, as you lay upon the bed of pain, and languishing, did it never come into your heart to bless God, did it never once alleviate your burdens, did it never for a moment suspend your attention to them, to reflect, what myriads of the family of God were, at that time, all around you, rejoicing in his benignity? With your supplications for the restoration of your own health and ease, were you never prompted to join your intercessions for the continuance of theirs? You heard perhaps, or if you heard not, did you not apprehend, that there were others circumstanced like you? Did you shut up the bowels of compassion from them? did their afflictions never reach your hearts? did you never wish them, if you thought they wanted them, the comforts that attended you? did you take no interest in their visitations?—Your heart's desire and prayer for all men was, that they might be saved: for those who were in health and prospered, that knowing the value of their blessings, and remembering that they also, as well as their afflicted brethren, "were in the body," they might have wisdom to improve their blessings, so as to be prepared for circumstances such as yours, through which they must pass at length; and for those, over whom the shadows of adversity had stretched themselves, that in you and them, "patience might have its perfect

work, that ye might be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," and that in this world, or in a better, ye might come out of all your tribulations, as "gold out of the fire."

When in those seasons you saw the solicitude of your friends; the assiduity, perhaps, of a pious offspring to repay your care of them, in doing for you what now you could do no longer for yourself; when you observed their anxiety, if any human care or intercession could avail to snatch you from the impending danger; when you saw them sacrificing ease, and rest, and health, to administer to your deliverance and comfort, holding nothing dear to them, that, if the will of God were such, they might by any means restore you and retain you; when you saw their zealous care to do all to which their power extended, and their heartfelt anguish as to that which their power could not reach; when, in their countenances you perceived the alternate marks of hope and apprehension, of comfort and distress; while you saw all this, while you experienced the benefits and the consolations of their friendship, were your hearts so hard, that such powerful attachment and such zealous service could draw forth from you no more than the ordinary current of affection? No, Christian, surely that could not be. In such a situation, the lightest expressions of sincere friendship come full upon the heart to a warmer welcome, and with more than ordinary weight.

When we are about to lose our blessings, it is then, perhaps, that we first see them in their true importance. It is the same, when it seems to us that we are about to leave them. The last conversation, the last kind offices, the last mutual interchange of tender

words and silent looks; that last scene, my friends, will agitate the inmost heart, and set open all the springs of sympathy and benevolence. While that last scene is drawing nigh, and as long also as the impression of it remains in memory, every thing partakes of its tender influences. While the heart is thus mollified by the united power of sharp affliction and solemn expectation, every kindness, every condolence, every good wish, every, even the lightest token of benevolent attention, sinks deep into it. The merit of our friends puts on an unusual amiableness, and every thing we love is inexpressibly endeared to us.

Christians, have you ever felt these sentiments? If you have, you cannot willingly abandon them; for as surely as you have felt them, you approve them. You would have loved yourselves the better, if in all time past, these had on all occasions been the abiding sentiments of your hearts. The man who is as sensible as he ought to be, and by a very little measure of reflection might become, of the important use that may be made of such circumstances, and of their influences to give pleasantness, acceptableness, and accuracy to his social duties, not only within the more contracted circle of his family and friends, but also in the wider range of his benevolent affections, will often be retracing these circumstances, and their influences, in his mind and heart, that he may avail himself of them in the services that he owes to the universal family of God, and in the improvement of his own soul to a resemblance of the universal parent. In such cares he will be the more assiduous, if he will permit himself to think, that the heart which has once been exposed to such powerfully humanizing and attendering influences. if it is not much the better, must of necessity become much the worse. Again,

To resign ourselves entirely to his disposal, is certainly to honour God; and every event of life which we apply to the composing of our minds into resignation, confidence, and complacency in the divine government, we direct to the honour of its Author. Pain, disease, and danger, may contribute to form in us this happy temper; and may be rendered the means of its support and improvement. You know of whom it is said, that he "learnt obedience by the things which he suffered." Of whatever different senses these words are capable, none is more natural than this—that his resignation unto God, and his confidence in him, were promoted and magnified by the severe afflictions he underwent. Human nature submits without reluctance to necessity; and those necessary trials and afflictions which we cannot escape, and out of which we cannot help ourselves, are the instruments of generating and nourishing that unreluctant submission. Much indulgence and little discipline can hardly fail to make a petulant and froward child. High health and great prosperity long continued, with but few or slight interruptions, are not very favourable to that self-annihilation which is a state of mind at once most easy and most comfortable to its owner, and a tribute of homage due to the wise and gracious Parent of the universe. Light afflictions are not so friendly to the growth and establishment of this happy temper, as severer and more oppressive ones. Against the former, we seem to have support and help in the hope of overcoming them; and the mind, disposed and excited to resist and struggle with them, whatever other benefit it may derive from such trials, finds little aid in them, towards perfecting its submission to the will of God.

Much care, perhaps, and much exertion too, in such circumstances, may be required to keep down a repining, fretful spirit, and to preserve any tolerable measure of satisfaction in the government of heaven. It is in the great calamities of life, in which we cannot help ourselves, and in which friendship cannot help us, the pressure and the issues of which are, or are deemed by us to be, without the reach of human power; it is when we feel most sensibly the conviction of our own impotence, and the vanity of all other confidences, that we feel ourselves most perfectly disposed, and perhaps most completely enabled, to subdue our own will, and to cast ourselves entirely on the good pleasure of our Maker. It is from the serious recollection, and the wise application of experience such as this, that we derive the most efficacious aids to bring our own will, upon all occasions, into a complete coincidence with the will of God, and to an habitual consent to all he does, or shall do, with us or ours.

Recollect the feelings of your hearts, while the ministers of death were making and renewing their assaults upon the friends you have loved; and compare them with the feelings of your heart, when the fatal blow was struck, and the irreparable catastrophe was come upon you. Your first state of mind, it may be, was anxiety, tumult, agitation, restlessness, and reluctance; your wishes, it may be, savoured much of reluctance to the will of God; your importunities to heaven, it may be, were neither so dutiful, nor so reverent, as they should have been. The succeeding state of mind, perhaps, was calm, composed, and silent. It was God. You acknowledged his right to do what he would with his own. You knew the rod, and who

had appointed it. The burden lay heavy on your heart; but it was the will of God, and your heart disposed itself to bear it; it was best you thought; though you did not see this, you believed it: You approved the growing submissiveness of your temper, and found yourselves willing to renounce all choice, to suppress all wishes of your own, and to refer yourselves, and all your circumstances, to God; to wait his will, and to cast your cares on him. When similar events have happened to yourselves, the influence of them has perhaps been similar; alarm, dissatisfaction, and reluctance, which, it may be, accompanied the first impressions of affliction and of danger, while as yet you thought yourselves within help and hope; sunk at last into submission, tranquillity, and acquiescence. As your experience of your own impotence, and the inefficacy of human aids, increased, your conviction of your dependence upon God increased with it. You found yourself entirely in his hands; you were willing to think well of your condition there; his power, which can neither be controlled nor eluded, showed every wish of that kind to be as weak, as it was vain; and as you could not prevail, so neither would you repine against him; in better hands you could not be: it is God, you said, let him do with me whatever seemeth to him good.

Such, my friends, ought to be, at all times, the voluntary and settled dispositions of your minds. If you be Christians, any more than by profession, it is your daily study, not only to do what is the will of God, but moreover to rejoice, whatever your circumstances may be, that they are what he has appointed. You are at all times in his hands; equally, when the feeling of your strength, and the

effectual services of your friends, may have rendered you less attentive to that dependence, as when the total failure of these blessings may have impressed it upon your hearts with the deepest sensibility, and most powerful conviction. If, of these different situations, the one, and the more ordinary condition of mankind, that of present enjoyment, be less favourable to the reverent acknowledgment of the hand of God in the disposition of our circumstances, the wise man will avail himself of all the experience he has ever had of this other situation, that of affliction and sorrow, to enable him to think justly of divine Providence; to be contented whatever may be his portion, and to attain that state of mind, which shall finally enable him, "in all things to give thanks."

Self-will and worldliness, the natural offspring of prosperity, are the two great enemies of resignation. To have had this self-will controlled and overpowered—to have been sensibly compelled to forego our own choice, and to take that of God—to have felt experimentally the vanity of these objects after which worldliness so eagerly aspires, is of great efficacy to break the mind to habits of religious submission. And if these circumstances have not been so tremendous as we feared; if good hath attended, or resulted from them, their tendency is to improve the submission of the Christian into something more; it may, and of right it ought to be exalted, from profound, to cheerful and complacent resignation.

Again, let me just add once more, that another instance, in which the good man will be studious to direct the visitations of which we speak to the honour of their author, is, the application of the argu-

ments they suggest, to enhance his conceptions of the value and importance of gospel promises ; and to confirm the purpose of his heart, by the faithful maintenance of the Christian character, to maintain his title to them.

“ This,” saith the Apostle, “ is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” Precious promise ! the accomplishment of which will make us like unto the angels of God, revealing in us all the glory of his children ; and the hope of which, has power enough to set our hearts at ease about all the accidents of this life, and to inspire us with tranquillity and comfort, when the end of it comes in view. How gloomy were the prospect, and how comfortless the approach to it, if in death there were an end of man ! How faint and ineffectual the consolation, if the hope of surviving that mysterious revolution of our being, rested solely on the comments of our own minds ; upon some apprehended intimations that we observed in the Creator’s works ! Hope, from such a source, might have entertained us in the calms and gleams of life, but would it have been firm enough to uphold us amidst its storms and tempests ?

Christians, when you made near approaches towards the house appointed for all the living, would your composure, would your fortitude have been what it was, if your hope had stood, not upon God’s promises, but upon your own arguments ? Without seriousness, you could not look upon death ; without terror, I may be permitted to suppose, you did look at him. Without some soft regrets you could not abandon life ; yet, with full consent of heart, you were ready to have laid it down. It was a trying circumstance ; you felt all the difficulties of it ; what

was it that upheld you under them? As flesh and heart were failing, whence was it you derived your steadiness and comfort? From reason and philosophy was it you derived them? Alas, when you were most in need of such supports, you could neither form nor recollect, nor understand an argument upon the subject; perhaps the principles on which it must have rested, were in that pressing hour, beyond your comprehension. No, Christian, promise and example were the cordials that revived you: the precious promises of God; the glorious exemplar of his Son. This, said you, is the promise that God has promised us, even eternal life. You said, and your faith failed not, "because Christ lives, you should live also."

Do you remember, Christian, how precious, in that hour of darkness, you esteemed these thoughts, and promises, and hopes? Added to your good conscience, they were all the wealth you possessed. In the general wreck of all other comforts, these alone remained with you, and with these, perhaps you thought, and not unjustly, that you could submissively and decently have finished your course. Without them, I am persuaded that you could with no tranquillity have contemplated that event. What would you have done, in that helpless hour, if your conscience had been in arms against you? Or what, if there had been no kind promise on which to have reposed your souls? If your heart was not greatly moved, it was, because it was stayed on God; keep it so. Remember what in your distress, you thought of the promises of God. Remember, that into like need of the peace they speak to those who are entitled to them, you must come again. The ministers of death, when they shall again beset you, will not encourage you to presume on promises, from the terms

of which you have departed. Abide in Christ. The appointed issue of this preparatory state, no less than the credit of its progressive periods, and the comfort of its closing scenes, depends upon your patience, perseverance, and fidelity.

Continue patient in well doing. Of those who have been within the near prospect of death and of eternity, it may well be expected, that when next they go thither, it should be with better preparation, and with more abundant comforts. Of those who have felt the urgent need, and the mighty power of the Christian character, and of the divine promises, amidst such scenes of oppressive languor and of awful expectation, it may reasonably be presumed, that they will be diligent to keep alive these salutary impressions, and faithful to pursue them, through all their genuine consequences.—To have had such experimental knowledge, and such deep conviction of things so unspeakably interesting, is a privilege that may be turned to great account as a powerful means of further improvement. Such salutary lessons should not be permitted to die away out of our minds. Precious promises! given us that we might be made partakers of a divine nature!—capable of shedding the sweetest influences over all the vicissitudes of life, and capable, even in death, of administering the strongest consolations!

Ought privileges like these to be forfeited?—Surely the man who hath such hopes in him, “should purify himself, even as he, the Lord, is pure;” he should keep himself “unspotted from the world,” and should “perfect holiness in the fear of God.”



APPENDIX.

A SERMON,

Preached to a Society of Protestant Dissenters, in the City of York. By the Rev. William Wood, on Wednesday, December 31, 1800, immediately after the interment of the Rev. Newcome Cappe.

ACTS x. 24.

An eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures.

I NEED not inform this assembly, that no common man has now been laid in the grave. The general appearance of all around me sufficiently indicates, that the serious event which has brought us together in this place, at this unusual season, is felt by more than a small number of relatives and friends. It is to eminent intellectual talents, and to acknowledged worth of publick character, that the present tribute of respect is paid. When a good man is taken from private life and a confined sphere of activity, he will be long and deeply lamented by his forsaken associates; the remembrance of his virtues will be long and fondly cherished by those who have enjoyed his affection: but the attention of a country, or of a large neighbourhood, cannot be excited; the regret of numbers cannot be expressed for the loss of blessings which have been known only to few. In this case the funeral rites are properly simple and brief: the official address of the Christian minister is directed solely to the living,

and has little or no concern with the character of the dead.

But excellence of a rarer kind, energies more vigorous, and usefulness more extensive, should not be suffered to slide away in silence, and to perish in oblivion. The righteous are entitled to everlasting remembrance: not for their own sake—praise to a deaf ear is dull and unavailing: the lifeless corpse is insensible alike to applause and to disgrace—but to rouse the slumbering virtue of the living, to animate the well-disposed to nobler deeds, to inspire the timid with greater confidence in their own strength, and to point out to all, the fair paths of honour and happiness.

I am painfully sensible that to do justice to an object so grand, an end so important, and an aim so difficult, abilities of the first order are required. And I should shrink from an attempt, in which, after all, I engage with a faltering tongue, if I were not encouraged to hope, that the generous pleasure which attends the survey of intellectual vigour and moral eninence will take entire possession of your souls, and make you regardless of all beside. I am still farther supported by the assurance, that however feebly the description may be given, your own previous knowledge will approve its fidelity. For I am not, on this occasion, compelled to frame a fictitious tale: I need not employ the varnish of art to produce a delusive image by the magick of splendid colours. I am only to follow the simple guidance of truth and nature.

I have, moreover, the satisfaction to reflect, that I shall not be embarrassed by the untoward union of opposite qualities. I am not to celebrate a departed warrior, who made his way to success and glory through ruined cities and ensanguined fields; I am not to reconcile the feelings of patriot virtue with the groans of dying heroes, the tears of helpless orphans, and the cries of famished peasants.

Nor am I to accompany the statesman through the turns and windings of his way ; and to undertake the humiliating task of endeavouring to palliate dishonourable means, by displaying the important ends for which those means were employed.

Nor yet have I to ask your grateful admiration of talents and studies, which had for their object nothing more than the increased comfort or luxurious enjoyment of the present life. I am not to commemorate the inventions of the artist who has abridged the toil of the industrious and made large additions to the publick wealth—or the observations of the astronomer who has given greater facility to the commerce of distant nations—or the investigations of the chemist who has followed nature into her inmost recesses, has compelled her to assume new forms, and has extorted from her the knowledge of new expedients for the readier production of known effects.

I appear this day in my proper character as a minister of religion. I am to bring nothing to your view which has not a near, an inseparable connexion with your everlasting interests ; I am to claim your regard for the advocate of piety and virtue, a defender of sacred truth, a preacher of the gospel of peace, *an eloquent man who was mighty in the Scriptures.*

The friend whom we have just accompanied to the *dark and narrow house appointed for all living*, was devoted from his youth to the service of the sanctuary. Descended from a father who had long sustained the office of a Christian minister with reputation and success, in a neighbouring opulent commercial town, he obtained his profession by a kind of inheritance. But with him it was not a passive succession to an hereditary employment. The sphere of action and usefulness desired for him by parental affection, was fully approved by his own deliberate choice. He joyfully received the prophet's man-

tle with the prophet's goods. And, in so doing, he was not actuated by views of aspiring ambition or indulgent ease. He cast behind him all hopes of dignified station, of spiritual authority, of political influence, and of ample revenue. Placed by the accident of birth without the pale of the established church, he sought not a higher lot. He could not purchase the patronage of the state at what he deemed the expense of an independent mind. All he asked was, to have free access to the oracles of God, unfettered by human creeds, unrestrained by the chilling dread of ecclesiastick censures. He made a just distinction between the sacred rights of conscience, and the just claims of the civil magistrate. He thought it his first duty to render unto God the things that are God's; his next, to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. In the arrangement of his religious creed, in his private and official intercourse with the Father of his spirit, he esteemed himself accountable to no man: in whatever concerns the publick peace, the secular rights of private men, or the social interests of the present life, he bowed to his country's laws.

But though he declined submission to human power where he acknowledged no master but Christ, and no guide but the written word, in the study of that word he disdained not the assistance of human science. Sensible of the immense extent of divine truth in all its bearings and all its dependencies, convinced that the office of a Christian minister should not be lightly and hastily assumed, he eagerly embraced all the means of acquiring general knowledge. He pursued a regular course of academick studies; he drank freely of the invigorating, cheering streams of ancient wisdom; he entirely neglected no branch of those inquiries which are usually stiled profane. But the sacred wisdom of revealed religion was in all cases the final object of his regard. Whatever he studied, and

whatever he acquired, he applied it all to the immediate design of his profession; he made it all conducive to a critical skill in the Holy Scriptures. These he read by day; on these he thought by night. Well versed in the Greek and Roman classick writers, he derived from them frequent assistance in explaining the New Testament. But though he gratefully employed them as useful auxiliaries, he by no means received them as unerring guides. He did not look for attick purity or attick elegance in the barbarised stile of Hellenistick Jews. He well knew that the language in which the Evangelists and Apostles wrote, was not that in which they commonly conversed and thought. He was convinced that their narratives and epistles could not be completely understood without a constant attention to Hebrew idioms. It was, therefore, in his estimation, an object of primary importance, to obtain a thorough insight into the original language and most ancient version of the Jewish Scriptures. He regarded the peculiar dialect of the Greek interpreters, as, in most cases, the best key to the obscure expressions of the first dispensers of Gospel doctrine. With these aids he generally suffered the inspired authors to explain their own meaning. He entered with nice exactness into the distinguishing manner of each: he pursued their train of thought: he compared them with each other: he considered the circumstances in which they were placed, the opinions which they had previously formed, and the manner in which they were likely to be influenced by the prevailing sentiments of the times. To the explanations of learned commentators he had frequent recourse: no one ever read them with greater care, or could boast a more extensive acquaintance with their works. But his chief dependence was on his own researches. Whatever he possessed was properly his own, the result of his own patient investigation, the dictate of his own cool and serious judgment.

The retired, and, in a great degree, uncommunicated studies of many a laborious year, at length gave him nearly the same views of the New Testament, as, in different connexions, and under different influences, have been gradually opened to the world by the writings of a Lindsey, a Jebb, a Priestley, and other divines who, for some time, have been generally known by the name of Unitarian Christians. But though in the general issue he nearly agreed with those eminent inquirers into Scripture doctrine, his whole train of thought had an original cast, and in some respects a specifick difference from that of every other Christian believer. This was the natural, the unavoidable effect of an examination truly free, conducted on enlarged principles, and satisfied with nothing short of what appeared to himself decisive evidence.

Nor let it be supposed that these different deductions from the same Scriptures are a valid objection to the divine authority of the Scriptures themselves, or any disparagement of their worth and usefulness. Let it not be pleaded, on the one hand, that on this account there is need of an infallible expounder; or insinuated, on the other, that, by making this concession, we favour the doubts of the sceptick, or afford occasion of triumph to the infidel. I appeal to the testimony of incontestable fact in support of the assertion, that some of the firmest, warmest, and most active advocates of the Christian faith have been found in the number of those, who have been most strenuous in their claim to the right of private judgment, and have exercised that right with the greatest freedom and boldness.

No one had a stronger conviction of the divine authority of Moses and of Christ, than our departed friend. The more deeply he studied the sacred Scriptures, the more clearly he understood, or thought he understood, the writings of the prophets and apostles, the more distinctly

did he perceive, the more steadily did he acknowledge the consistence and beauty of the two connected systems. When he differed from others, he did not wonder at the difference. He was no more surprised to discover that those, whose talents he respected and whose esteem he valued, did not concur with him in all his sentiments, than to find that they were not of his own height, of his own colour, and of his own form. Instead of lamenting it as a misfortune that the same integrity, similar diligence, and equal mental discernment do not always lead to exactly the same point, he admired in it the wise appointment of infinite goodness. He knew that where all is easy, and where all men agree, there is little inducement to close and continued observation. He was aware that the mind calls not forth its whole strength till difficulties are to be solved, discordant opinions are to be compared, and a preference to one or the other is to be given. He was convinced that the influence of divine truth on the heart and life entirely depends upon the attention which it excites, and the ardour with which it is pursued. He therefore rejoiced in that variety of sentiment which keeps curiosity alive, creates an interest in the search after truth, and by making it the object of repeated inquiry, gives it free access to the active powers, and produces religious obedience.

For to this important, this one essential purpose, all his own studies were uniformly applied. In whatever varying light the circumstantial particulars and incidental doctrines of divine revelation appeared to his growing mind, he discerned and revered, as the ground work of the whole, a fixed and efficacious principle of inward godliness. Whatever occasion he found to correct, or to improve his former decisions, here he experienced no doubt, here he was never compelled to retract or to qualify. Whatever excursions he took in the regions of

speculative inquiry, whatever he learnt from Moses and the prophets, from Christ and his apostles, to this conclusion he was invariably led: "Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is all that is truly interesting to man; Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever thing are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things, and the God of peace shall be with you. Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you to be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be administered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Deeply impressed with a conviction of this solemn truth, he had no ambition to acquire a critical skill in the language of the Holy Scriptures, but in strict connexion with its evident subservience to the forming of a pious and virtuous character. As he wished rather to be, than to appear, a good scholar; so he set more value on the inward temper of a devout mind, and the silent aspiration of a grateful heart, than on all the brilliance of that active spirit which rushes into busy life, solicits general notice, and extorts the applause of an admiring world. Indeed he was so far from a forward and ostentatious display of his own powers and of his own attainments, that,

as those who knew him best will readily allow, he carried an aversion to publick life, and a love of studious retirement, to a somewhat blameable excess. With natural and acquired capacities for extensive usefulness, in the course of five-and-forty years he was seldom absent from this city. With eminent talents for popular eloquence; with a rich fund of moral and religious knowledge, with a rare combination of mental qualities, a sound understanding, a vigorous fancy, and quick sympathetick feeling; with a copious flow of strong, and often beautiful expression; with a style of composition exactly, I may, perhaps add, exclusively, suited to his own impressive delivery; with a dignity of person and deportment which insured the attention of all who heard him, he seldom spake as a Christian minister but from this pulpit. Happy in a growing acquaintance with sacred truth, in the enjoyments of the family hearth, in the instructive converse of a few learned associates, and the esteem of a small Christian congregation, he had no ambition to fix the eyes of listening crowds, or to obtain the meed of extensive fame. If he had not been called to a pastoral charge in this ancient metropolis of the north, this fixed abode, or winter residence, of many a cultivated mind, this periodical resort of numerous attendants on judicial law; and if he had not been introduced to the knowledge of the latter highly respectable body of men, by the faithful friend of his youth, who long stood at the head of the bar in this circuit,* he might have passed through life little noticed and little known.

But though he confined his ministerial labours to the benefit of a few, he gave to that few all the respect which applauding multitudes could ever have required. His sermons were not the incoherent effusions of careless haste, or the cold harangues of formal duty. Whatever

* The late John Lee, Esq. his Majesty's Attorney General in the year 1783.

he performed he made conscience of endeavouring to perform well. His explanations of Holy Writ were addressed alike to the understanding and the affections. Whatever were the subjects he discussed, he drew liberally from his ample stores, and out of his treasures brought forth to his people things new and old. His devotional services were scriptural, animated, and affecting. His piety was, as it always should be, the combined operation of principle and feeling, a deliberate dictate of the judgment and a warm emotion of the heart. A firm reliance on the divine perfections, a fixed resignation to the divine will, and a steady persuasion that all the ways of God are just and good, formed, indeed, the characteristic features of his mind, appeared in all his works, and gave a just direction to the general course of his actions. Of this he has left a pleasing proof in those interesting Discourses on the Providence and Government of God, of which the publick are now possessed, and which are faithful copies from the tablet of his heart.

This was put especially to the test in the latter part of his life, when a melancholy stroke stopped the progress of his publick labours, nearly closed his private studies, and greatly impaired his active faculties. But though cut off from many of his former employments, and unfitted in a great degree for general intercourse, his pious affections still retained their accustomed tenour, his trust in God still preserved all its power. Tranquil in the bosom of a cheerful and ever attentive family, soothed with the marked regard of a few ancient friends, free from worldly care and mental disquiet, rejoicing in the Christian faith, and reposing all his hopes on his Father and his God, he passed years of increasing weakness without complaint, and at length died without a groan.

Which of us is not ready to exclaim in the fervent language of an impassioned heart, Let me die the death of

the righteous ; let my latter end be like his ? I trust, my brethren, we are all thus affected. I flatter myself it will not be laid to our charge, that when the good man is taken from the earth, we regard it not. When we contemplate departed worth, we cherish more than a feeling of simple approbation. We are sensible that we should do equal injustice to the dead and to ourselves, were we only to admire. Though the eloquent tongue which has so often spoken in this place is now consigned to the silent tomb, the Spirit by which it was inspired still speaks, and I am persuaded, will long continue to speak to this Christian church, to those who form a casual part of this assembly, to his numerous distant friends, and to all who have known his character. "Be ye followers of me, as I was of Christ," is the solemn language of his durable address. Though the sound does not strike our bodily ears, it is, I doubt not, felt in our hearts : and I entertain the pleasing hope that it sinks deep into our minds, and will be faithfully obeyed in our lives. To his surviving relatives, he has left a pattern which I am sure will never be forgotten. To his late assistant and now mourning successor, he has bequeathed a rich legacy of professional experience which I am confident will be valued more than choice silver. To you, the former attendants on his publick labours, there will ever remain a pleasing remembrance of the instruction, the caution, the reproof, the encouragement and consolation severally dispensed, each in its due season. It has, indeed, already for some time been only a pleasing remembrance. But though you have been bereaved, you have not been forsaken. It was a source of high satisfaction to your deceased pastor, that he then saw you, and was likely to leave you, under the faithful direction of a younger minister, "for whom he left the affection of a parent, and from whom he received in return a filial

love.”* You are sensible of your happiness, and I rejoice with you in it.

What then remains but that we all retire from this house of death with minds disposed to serious reflection, and with an earnest desire “so to number our own days as to apply our hearts to true wisdom?” We also are mortal. We also are made of frail materials, and cannot insure our health, our strength, or our lives, for a moment. Before the close of this short winter’s day, a sudden stroke may relax the sinews of our frame, debilitate our mental powers, and either snatch us away at once, or cause us to go down by slow degrees to the pit.

But were we certain of what we ourselves are accustomed to call “length of years and many days,” what at the best is human life? Is it not a vapour which soon dissolves into air? Is it not a shadow which is blotted out by the first passing cloud? What, on the retrospect, are “threescore years and ten?” Are they not “as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch of the night?” Time is on the wing; no barrier can stop his progress; no impediment can lessen his speed. Our years come and go in swift succession. Each has its fixed limits; each is distinguished by its peculiar events; each fulfils its appointed purpose in the immense scheme of divine Providence, and then is gone for ever. In a few hours another will have run its race. We shall hail its successor as a welcome guest, and shall express our benevolence to each other, by cordial wishes for a numerous similar seasons with equal or greater blessings in their train. In a few hours another century will also have finished its longer course. But with respect to that which the silent lapse of time is about to raise into being, we cannot employ a similar greeting. The commencement of many successive centuries none of

* Nearly Mr. Wellbeloved’s own words, in a letter to the preacher on the death of his revered friend.

us hope to see. Where are now the busy crowds who rejoiced in the first rising sun of the eighteenth? They have passed away as a flood, and are no more seen. Where will every one of us be long before the year nineteen hundred and one? In the cold and insensible mansions of the grave. "Our breath will have departed from us; the thoughts and intents of our hearts will have perished; we shall no more have a portion under the sun."

But can we be satisfied with eternal forgetfulness? Do not our aspiring souls pant for immortality? Do we not ardently desire, do we not anxiously crave, do we not with trembling solicitude almost demand, perpetuity of being and enjoyment?" These ardent desires, these anxious cravings, these trembling inclinations to demand, will be fully gratified, if we do not disappoint them by our own folly. The benevolent Creator who has implanted in us the wish, has formed us with a view to its completion. The Author and Finisher of our faith has directed our views to "an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." If we only employ the appointed means, and "walk worthy of our high calling," this inheritance will be our eternal portion. "The promises of God," delivered to us "by Christ Jesus, are all yea, and amen;" fixed and irrevocable. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." All that is to be done on our part, is fully made known in the revealed will of God. The doctrines of the New Testament are able to make us wise unto salvation. But their value entirely depends on the spirit with which they are studied, and the diligence with which they are improved. Though they are in themselves the written word of the everlasting God, to us they will be nothing more than a dead letter, if we do not apply them to our

hearts, and receive them as rules of conduct. The friend of whom in our mortal bodies we have now taken an affectionate farewell, was "mighty in the scriptures." He devoted the studies of his life to repeated examinations of their contents, not merely as a professional duty,—though that was ever present to his thoughts—but that he himself might have a stronger conviction of their importance, and might feel more of their practical influence. "He now rests from his labours, and his works follow him. He has fought a good fight, he has finished his course, he has kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him at the day of his appearing." If we cultivate his faith and patience, we shall like him in due time become partakers of the promises. If we persevere in a course of well-doing, we shall lament his loss only for a few earthly days, and shall celebrate with him an eternal sabbath in the blissful mansions of the just. The now forsaken domestick relatives will then be again blest with the husband, the parent, and brother; the members of this religious society, who have been long deprived of ministerial services which they once heard with profit and delight, will then again listen to the pastor and the friend. All who loved him here will then rejoice with him in the regions of perfect love, and will join the faithful servants of the God of all nations, kindred and tongues, in one triumphant song of praise. Therefore, my beloved brethren, let us be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as we know that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Let us be faithful unto death, that we may then receive a crown of life.







